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Henry Fairlie Brains George Will

CAMPAIGN '86: BARNES IN CALIFORNIA, KUTTNER ON LIBERALS WHO WIN

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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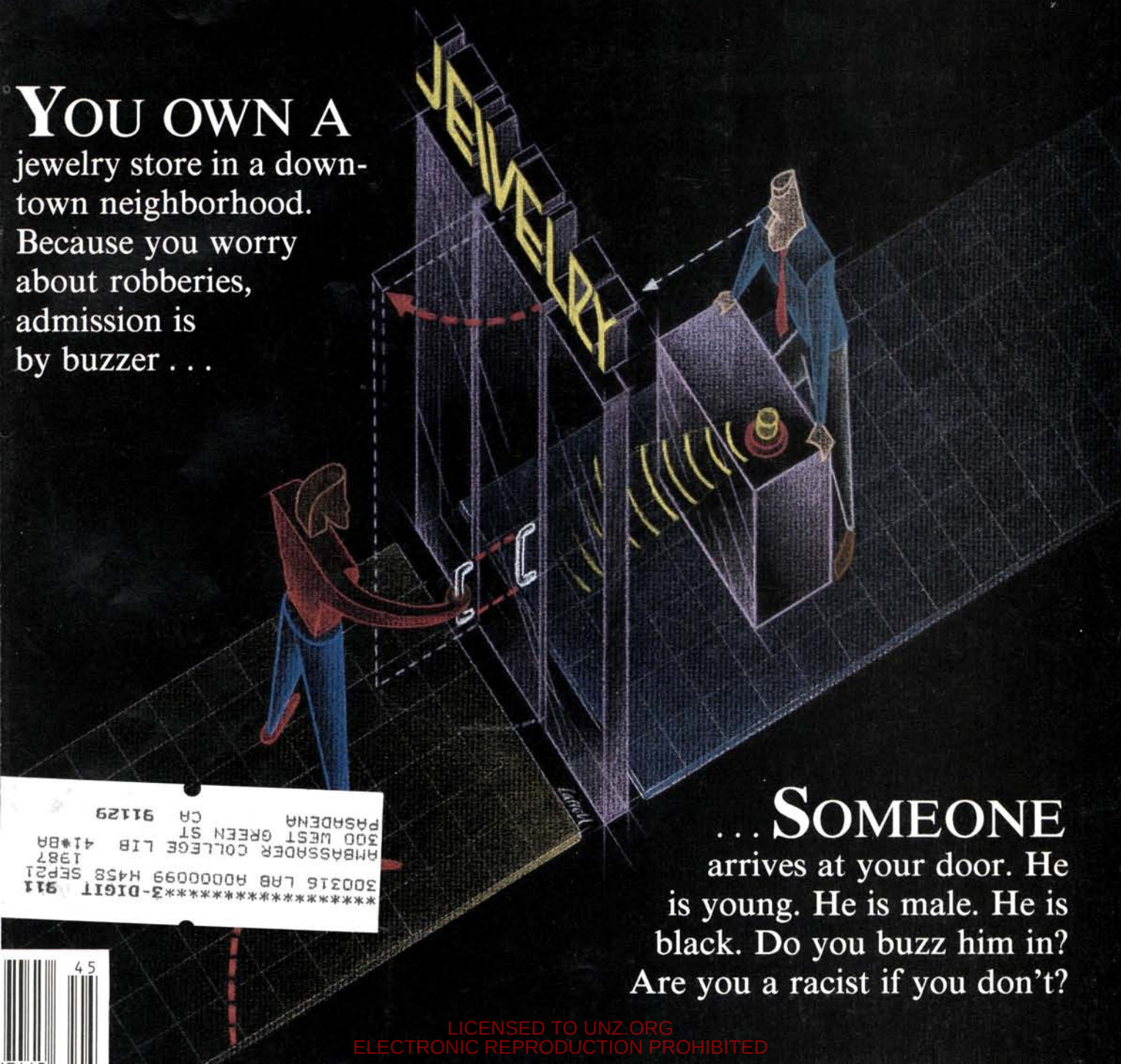

. . . SOMEONE arrives at your door. He is young. He is male. He is black. Do you buzz him in? Are you a racist if you don't?

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

BOESKY'S DISEASE

Every year *Forbes* magazine publishes its list of the 400 richest Americans, and every year I like to cross-check that list against the notions about wealth in America promulgated by the likes of Malcolm Forbes and his friend President Reagan. Forbes writes, "The real excitement . . . of the 400 is not in who's on and who's off," an assertion that will surprise the energetic *Forbes* p.r. staff. Rather, "The real payoff for America" is that "the country's GNP grew 2.7 percent" thanks to "the competitive free-for-all among our free enterprisers."

Two-point-seven percent is nice, but not as nice as 16 percent, which is how much the net worth of the Forbes 400 grew last year. The minimum fortune needed to make the list grew from $150 million to $180 million, which is an even nicer 20 percent. These numbers give added weight to the question whether the way individuals enrich themselves in the American economy actually adds to social wealth as well.

Three years ago I calculated that only 59—one out of seven—of the Forbes 400 actually earned their own fortunes in socially productive ways. The rest made the list through inheritance, the passive holding (as opposed to active developing) of land and energy resources, economically useless paper shuffling, and the free acquisition of valuable government monopolies such as TV licenses. Not much has changed since then, but each year brings its own special flavor.

The best way to achieve a fortune in America remains inheritance. Fourteen of the 51 newcomers in 1986 chose this route, including one reverse inheritance: Bella Wexner, who owns $210 million of stock in The Limited, the clothing chain founded by her son, Leslie. What a nice boy! Thirteen new real estate developers made it this year, mostly, it seems, by building shopping centers.

The post-industrialization of America continues. This was a big year for entertainment figures, with the arrival of Merv Griffin ($235 million), Dick Clark ($180 million), Berry Gordy, founder of Motown ($180 million), Aaron Spelling, creator of "Dynasty" ($235 million), and Mark Goodson, inventor of "The Wheel of Fortune" ($300 million). Among other entrepreneurs, the key to success seems to be marketing more than manufacturing. Frank Perdue ($200 million) and Ralph Lauren ($300 million) are new to the list. And this year brought some early mega-payoffs from the yuppie phenomenon. The man behind Reebok athletic shoes is worth $270 million. The founder of The Gap, the jeans chain, survived a disastrous early-1980s slump and recovered to the tune of $335 million by "repositioning" his business for older customers and developing the Banana Republic chain of stores selling phony jungle gear.

But the most interesting development of 1986 is the arrival en masse of Reagan-era financial manipulators: ten of them, of whom no less than six (including former Treasury Secretary William Simon) made their fortunes through so-called "leveraged buy-outs." A seventh—the richest newcomer, with an estimated $500 million—is investment banker Michael Milken, the pioneer of "junk bonds," high-risk securities often used to finance leveraged buy-outs. Yet another LBO operator, John Kluge, is now the second richest man in America, with at least $2.5 billion. Just two years ago Kluge had barely $300 million to his name.

In a leveraged buy-out, a small group of investors borrows a large sum of money to buy a company from its public shareholders. The huge fortunes come from the fact that the company is usually worth far more than the hapless shareholders are paid. Kluge, for example, was chief executive of Metromedia, owner of TV stations and other communications businesses, when he offered the stockholders $38 a share, or a total of $720 million, for their stock. For a fee of $4 million, the distinguished banking firm of Lehman Brothers certified that this was a fair price. The deal went through in June 1984. Over the next two years Kluge—"this canny, twinkling, happy lad," as Malcolm Forbes lovingly describes him—sold off Metromedia's assets for a total of $4.6 billion. Canny? Sure. Socially productive? Hard to see.

This year, as always, the newcomers to the Forbes 400 were already very rich before they made that last big breakthrough. Some floated up with the stock market. But most, we are assured, work very hard. Twelve hours is "a short day" for Michael Milken, grinding out those junk bonds. What's the point? Anyone with, say, $20 or $30 million can sate virtually any material desire, and so can his children and grandchildren. It would be tough to spend a $100 million fortune faster than it grew, even if it was invested in U.S. Savings Bonds. Anyway, says a psychologist in the current *Forbes*, "Many millionaires—in fact, the majority—live simply."

It's a tenet of the Reagan/Forbes mythology that most rich people work hard and live below their means. What's more, it's probably true. Ironically, though, this makes hash of other basic Reaganite axioms. Capitalist theory—especially in its Classic-Comics version, supply-side economics—is based on narrowly behavioristic assumptions about human psychology. People are moved to be productive in order to increase their claims on the goods and services produced by others. They work in order to buy. But this incentive is at constant risk of being snuffed out by taxes, which lower the trade-off between effort and material reward.

The Forbes 400 demonstrates that all the main actors in the American economy are exempt from these basic assumptions about what makes the economy tick. They can't possibly be the rational maximizers of economics textbooks. Why do they do it? "It's a sickness I have in the face of which I am helpless," explains arbitrageur Ivan Boesky ($200 million). That's melodramatic, but there must be a grain of truth. A sensible maximizer would stop accumulating at $10 or $20 million, when it becomes pointless. But few do that. The explanation must be that the type of person who would be inclined to stop at $10 million—that is, most of us—won't get to $10 million in the first place.

The lesson is not that all megamillionaires are social parasites, though many are. The lesson is that all the ludicrous coddling of wealth in recent years—the large tax cuts, the virtual abandonment of death duties, the cultural celebration of the rich—has been unnecessary. Human greed, the seed of capitalist prosperity, is hardier than that.

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CORRESPONDENCE

CROWDED SKIES

To the editors:

In "Skyjam" (September 29), you outlined numerous privileges available to the "Learjet" set. Permit me to add another that Congress has granted them. Under the prior legal set-up, private aircraft arriving in the United States directly from foreign countries were required to pay the U.S. Customs Service $25 for each arrival between five p.m. and eight a.m. The owners of private aircraft found this to be too great a financial burden, and Congress changed the law. Now private aircraft have to pay $25 only once at the beginning of the fiscal year; Uncle Sam picks up the tab thereafter. Another rip-off for the Learjet set.

STUART I. MAYER
San Bruno, California

To the editors:

I've logged over 31,000 miles this year on nine different airlines and two vials of sedatives. *Every* flight has been delayed, some up to five hours. The booking agents are curt, the flight attendants harried—but worst of all, the planes are in terrifyingly bad condition. On one cross-country flight on a national airline the bathroom sink was held together by adhesive tape. When the plane took off, it began to drip. An attendant explained vaguely, "Well, it's been raining a lot."

On a recent flight, as we pulled over on the runway because traffic was backed up in Los Angeles due to the Aeromexico crash, an attendant confided, "These days, flying is like pulling out on the freeway at rush hour." Rush hour on the San Diego Freeway is bad enough; in the air it's untenable. Unless Reagan and the FAA get their act together, incidents like the Aeromexico disaster may soon become the rule.

ELLEN BYRON
New York, New York

MUGABE'S DEGREE

To the editors:

Prime Minister Robert Mugabe presides over a young nation at war with itself. He is one of a very few duly elected leaders of a majority-ruled nation in all of the African continent. Ian Smith sits in the Parliament. Joshua Nkoma is free to write and speak. Whites who previously fled have returned to their native land. Mugabe is no saint. But tyrant?

Mugabe was invited to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst before the publication of the report on human rights abuses by the Lawyer's Committee on Human Rights. I have spoken with Bill Berkely, author of that report. His description of the situation in Zimbabwe is somewhat different from that offered by your editorial ("Dictator's Degree," October 20).

There have been documented charges of detention without due process, kidnapping, and torture, directed toward members of tribal groups who have refused to accept the outcome of the elections and who are alleged to have stockpiled weapons supplied by South Africa. There is no justification for these horrors, and Mugabe has apparently been aware of what was going on. Without in any way rationalizing these atrocities, one can recall that throughout history there have been few cases, if any, where a government has found a way to deal with armed insurgency without abuse of human rights.

The Lawyer's Committee describes the situation as bred by decades of strife and warfare, and faults Mugabe for not ending a tradition of terror in some sections of the countryside that predates his government by decades. The report describes Mugabe's record of leadership as a mixed bag.

I find Prime Minister Mugabe's occasionally bloated Marxist rhetoric intellectually vapid. But I find his determination to build a majority-ruled society that includes the participation of white citizens worth noting, his economic pragmatism commendable. I cannot dismiss, as casually as your editorial does, progress in health and education. I am not offended by Mugabe's desire for independent non-alignment. His voice on issues in South Africa is authentic and worth listening to.

JOSEPH DUFFEY
Chancellor
University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Amherst, Massachusetts

The editors reply:

We don't know what Bill Berkely told Joe Duffey about his committee's report on

continued on page 49

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO WILL.

America in the 1980s is, according to George Will, a splendid place to be. For wherever he has looked, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist has found "the sharp sensations of morning—freshness and sobriety and a second chance."

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While puncturing pieties, assessing those in power, or just commenting on the antic parade of American life, George Will is refreshing, unpredictable and always splendid.

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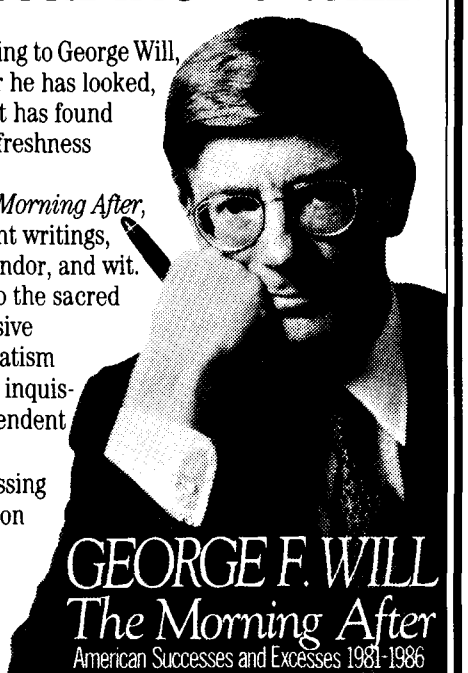

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
NOVEMBER 10, 1986

THE DEMOCRATS' VITAL SIGNS

Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory over Jimmy Carter and his 1984 re-election were supposed to herald a lasting shift in the balance of party power, a structural sea change on the order of those that occurred in 1896 (a Republican realignment) and 1932 (a Democratic one). But is a new age of Republican dominance really at hand? Or will Reagan's impact on the country's basic party structure turn out to be as iffy as his debt-driven economic boom?

Recall the evidence mustered by realignment enthusiasts. In 1984 the Republicans not only swept the presidential vote and kept control over the Senate, but also cemented their gains by winning races in the lower ranks of the political system. Southern states, once solidly Democratic, elected record numbers of Republicans all the way down the ticket. In polls, the number of self-described Republicans crept to within striking distance of the number of Democrats. Most promising for the Republicans, the shift in party identification seemed greatest among the young.

Yet this year, despite huge advantages in political technology and money, the Republicans will probably lose control of the Senate. According to a recent *Washington Post*/ ABC News poll, Democrats are ahead in five states that currently have Republican senators. If the Democrats hold those leads, and split four other "toss-up" states, they will make a net gain of five seats and take a 52-to-48 majority.

Does anyone remember the "Sagebrush Rebellion"? States leaning Democratic include three in the allegedly hard-core Republican West: North Dakota, Nevada, and Idaho. Washington, South Dakota, and Colorado are toss-ups. In the Sun Belt, Florida is leaning to a Democrat, and North Carolina and Louisiana are too close to call.

Tax reform, touted by some Republican pols as the stuff of realignment, seems not to have been. Nobody is even talking about it very much in the campaign. Tax reform's biggest beneficiaries are the poor, who don't vote much. When they do, they vote Democratic. Jack Kemp's dream of turning them into Republicans with an "Opportunity Society" pitch built around tax reform is still no more than a dream. As for the rich, the other group that wins big under tax reform, most would have voted Republican tax reform or no. For the middle class, that is, the majority of the voting population, the impact of tax reform is too ambiguous to make a difference at the polls.

Realignment talk always flew in the face of short-term election cycles. Each of the three sets of major elections going on this year has a different "base year." The current Senate incumbents were elected in 1980; governors, 1982; and representatives, 1984. The 1980 election was a Republican landslide. The landslide carried in several Republican Senate candidates who might have been too weak to win in an ordinary year. Now those weaknesses are showing, and the Republicans are losing. On the other hand, 1982 was a Democratic landslide year; a few vulnerable Democratic governors slipped in, and are now in trouble for re-election.

The growing dominance of political action committees, and shifts in patterns of PAC giving, have probably also acted to check realignment. A recent study by Citizens Against PACs (give them credit for truth in labeling) shows that 93 percent of all PAC contributions to House candidates in 33 selected states went to incumbents, regardless of party. As a rule, PACs prefer to bet on the devils they know. This has worked to the Democrats' advantage because they have more incumbents, but it can hardly be called a victory for them.

Thus, though the Democratic coalition has survived the loss of some of its constituent groups and come out better than many experts expected, the rough party equilibrium

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is not necessarily salvation. Public disaffection with both parties might well continue to deepen, especially when the bills for the debt boom start coming in. If the Republicans lose the Senate on November 4, the Democrats should celebrate—but not too much. It takes more than 52 senators to make a majority party.

NOTEBOOK

□ SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE: Last year the Supreme Court held that state laws against homosexual sodomy do not violate the constitutional right of privacy. Justice White sniffed that constitutional protection is for activities that are "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty, such that neither liberty nor justice would exist if [they] were sacrificed"—activities that are "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition." Sodomy not included. Or is it? In one of its first acts of the new term, the Court has let stand an Oklahoma Supreme Court decision holding that a state law against *heterosexual* sodomy *does* violate the Constitutional right of privacy. The Court issued its ruling without comment. So readers are invited to submit essays explaining how heterosexual sodomy is "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty" and "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition," whereas homosexual sodomy is not. Prize to be determined later.

□ YOU SAY D'AMATO AND WE SAY YUCK: In what has become a Reagan-era ritual, the president ordered the federal government to shut down for half a day on Friday, October 17, because Congress hadn't passed a budget. This flashy gesture is arguably unnecessary, but Reagan enjoys showing his contempt for government spending, which is nice, because the shutdown cost something like $60 million in pay to federal workers who weren't working. The hang-up in this case was the egregious Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who—with some help from his New York colleague Daniel Patrick Moynihan—held the whole government (and Congress's adjournment) hostage in his effort to save funding for a trainer plane being built on Long Island that even the Air Force doesn't want. Next time you hear Reagan or D'Amato complaining about government waste, think of what $60 million can buy.

□ SAUCE FOR THE GANDER: Something called the Federalist Society is holding a symposium on—what else?—Federalism later this month in Chicago. What is the Federalist Society? According to an ad for the symposium in the conservative *American Spectator*, it is "a potent voice for conservative legal thinking in law schools and in the government." That's a quote credited to the *New York Times*. Directly beneath this encomium comes the revelation that "the symposium is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities." What? Could this be the same National Endowment for the Humanities that recently reacted with stagy horror to the discovery that a TV show it was funding, "The Africans," is a trifle *gauchiste*, rather than scrupulously objective and neutral? The NEH cancelled what remained of its funding for "The Africans." Thank goodness there's still time to do the same for the Federalist Society.

□ TAX REFORM GOES TO WAR: "The need for tax reform—fewer foxholes in return for lower rates—had long been acknowledged. . . . " (The *Washington Post*, October 20.)

THE MONEY CULTURE

ACCOUNTING ALCHEMY

"HOW'S IT GOING?" If you run a small business or a household, you probably know the answer to that question intuitively. Or you can check your bank balance. Most people who run larger businesses, even complicated ones like banks, understand their financial positions the same way. But, unlike the proprietors of small businesses and households, they have to please shareholders, regulators, and customers. So if you ask a large business where it stands, you get reams of paper and tortuous explanations in the language of accounting.

This nomenclature is supposed to clarify, but it usually does the opposite. Corporate financial officers are smart folks; they know how to manipulate numbers to put the best light on things. And nowhere is the illuminator's art put to better use than in banking.

Banks use small amounts of capital—that is, the banks' own money—to leverage large amounts of assets. (BankAmerica, once the world's largest bank and now under siege from corporate raiders, has $4 billion in capital and $117 billion in assets.) Loans constitute most of those assets. Loans are assets since they usually get paid back in full at maturity and since, in the meantime, they generate interest income. You would think that banks would want to know, in a timely way, exactly how much their assets are worth. It's possible, for instance, for a bank to estimate on a particular day that it has a 90 percent chance of getting its principal back on a $1 million loan; therefore, the loan's market value that day is $900,000. Such estimating is an art, not a science. Markets practice the art every day, but banks—for reasons we'll see—would rather not estimate in public. Don't kid yourself: banks know the condition of their assets. They don't tell us, however, since accounting rules don't require them to mark their assets to market.

In fact, in banking these days the fantasy of accounting has taken over from the reality of money. For example, Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey has come up with a sensible proposal for relieving Third World countries of some of their load of debt. This relief would clearly help the United States politically and probably help us econom-

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ically by making Latin countries better markets for our imports. The Bradley plan would even help American banks. But there's an obstacle: accounting. If the plan went into effect tomorrow, banks would have to recognize publicly that a portion of the loans that they have made over the past decade to Latin American countries will never be recovered. In other words, the loans would have to be written off. Writing off loans means accepting losses on their books. This, banks won't do.

Now, understand that writing off these loans will produce no change in a bank's real-life financial position, or in its cash—only on its accounting position. It's the Emperor's New Clothes: the banks are already naked, but it doesn't count since no one has pointed it out. The Bradley plan would point it out.

The way the system works now, banks themselves decide when a loan has gone bad. Regulators look over their shoulders, but regulators are overworked, and, besides, they have a strong interest in maintaining the public's faith in the banking system. "There's a tacit understanding between the regulators and the banks," says the CEO of one large financial institutions. "They're afraid to create a crisis in confidence."

At the end of last year, Chase Manhattan had $6.6 billion in loans outstanding to Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina. The chances for these loans to be totally repaid

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart

1. WHICH WAY TO THE FRONT? 1 4

The Star Wars Summit, etc. Did the U.S. "win" at the summit by "losing" an agreement? Is the silo half-full or half-empty? Does anybody know what exactly was on the table in Iceland? Will Star Wars work? Are the Democrats, left flat-footed, for it or against it? Are the two nations edging toward agreement by expelling each others' diplomats? Given the bizarre level of discussion, Reagan can take pride in his summit approval rating. Earlier polls showed doubt about Star Wars and a national desire to disarm.

2. THE MAN WHO ISN'T THERE 2 2

Nicaragua. The trial of Eugene Hasenfus, the man nobody sent to Nicaragua, is playing against an oddly muted debate over the American anti-Sandinista activities. Few want to crawl out on the same limb with Daniel Ortega, especially before an election. George Bush went public, sort of, with his gung-ho connection. But watch out: even *USA Today* thinks this one smells.

3. ERA OF GUT FEELINGS — 1

Elections. TV Guide, TNR, "Nightline," and others agreed last week that this is an awful election year. Policy debate has largely taken a back seat to personal charge and countercharge, with negative TV spots dominating many contests. Perhaps issues of national gravity have been lost in the shadow of Reagan's enormous popularity. Few want to take the chance of getting on his wrong side on anything.

4. CAPITALIST POOL — 1

Wealth. Forbes's list of 400 rich people got a lot of predictable ink, given the country's fascination with acquisition. The most interesting thing about *Forbes*'s list, however, is that it isn't about anything except money. *Forbes*'s listmakers seek anybody, no matter where their money came from, no matter how unknown or uninfluential, for their rundown, an effort that seems most useful to Robin Leach.

5. WHAT'S BAD FOR GM * 2

Apartheid. Campus protest shantytowns and black activists can only do so much. But the departure from South Africa of such U.S. institutions as General Motors and IBM, citing instability and (in GM's case) dissatisfaction with the pace of racial policy change, is a meaningful public opinion development. Unlike activists, such institutions are seen as embodying U.S. values and have the respect of the mainstream.

6. THE FUN NEVER SETS — 1

Royal Family. Quick now, who heads the government of Italy? Of Spain? Of Brazil? Of Australia? Of any Scandinavian country? Bet you know how Prince Philip parts his hair, though, and just what he said to indiscreet British schoolboys in China during the Royals' well-reported visit there.

7. BREAKING THE RECORD * 2

Home leisure. Good-bye LPs. Record stores are now overflowing with cutouts as companies dump their LP inventories in favor of compact discs. CD home penetration is actually ahead of the VCR's pace, and is expected to double next year. As for videocassettes, Christmas demand is expected to be so great that the industry doesn't think it can meet it.

8. MOVABLE HYPE * 4

Literacy. Literacy is static as a crusade. Can it become a debate? Both *Grand Street* and *Harper's* have reprinted an address by Hans Magnus Enzensberger arguing that the culture of true illiteracy has many strengths, while the West's real problem is the more pernicious "second-order illiteracy" of TV and consumerism. Real literacy no longer has the social value it once had, while Enlightenment ideals (which in a middle-class form underlie the hyped ABC-PBS literacy campaign) have failed.

9. THE SIX-YEAR ITCH 3 2

Columbus. Sick of Columbus yet? The Christopher Columbus Column in Barcelona and the Statue of Liberty, which face each other across the Atlantic, have announced their engagement. This event, complete with a Liberty-size gown and giant ring, is an art event that will continue in both cities for six years, and culminate in 1992 with marriage. The growing Columbus snowball can't possibly maintain itself for six whole years, though it's never too early to steel yourself. Regrets only.

10. PINK SLIP OF SUCCESS — 1

Older workers. The abolition of mandatory retirement notwithstanding, a third of male U.S. workers over 55 are out of work, either through layoffs or severances offered by restructuring firms. The trend will leave half of all over-55s out of work by the turn of the century. The remaining work force will have to underwrite tremendous benefits being drawn by longer-living retirees, as well as the apparent waste of resources. Women, too, are being fired in increasing numbers, especially at the executive level, a trend indicating their full arrival as members of the executive community.

* Item resurfaced in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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are nil, yet Chase has written off or "placed on nonaccrual" (the stage just before a write-off) only minuscule pieces of the loans. Instead, Chase, like other big banks, periodically "restructures" its loans to these countries. In other words, the bank either extends maturities or, more cleverly, lends the countries more money so they can pay the interest on their current loans.

The game works like this: Say you buy a car and take out a loan for $10,000. The time comes for your $500 monthly payment, but you've just lost your job and you're broke. So the bank lends you $500 more, and you use it to make the interest payment. The new loan simply gets tacked on to your original one. Not only does the bank get its interest, but it also adds to its asset base. The alternative is for the bank to admit that the loan is shaky and will probably never be paid back. It can repossess your car and resell it for $4,000, taking a loss of $6,000 on the loan. That $6,000 is a direct charge against profits and, ultimately, it depletes the bank's capital. Given the choice, it naturally prefers to lend you the $500 and to keep the fiction alive that the loan is sound.

HOW LONG can this go on? In 1981, when the game was already well-developed, Anthony Sampson wrote in *The Money Lenders* that "these precise and elaborate structures depend in the end on almost mythical assumptions about the reliability of sovereign states. The assumptions strain the bankers' concept of credit to its limits; but if enough people share that trust it becomes a kind of reality. Bankers, together with their clients, always have a vested interest in hope."

A few weeks ago, I heard Willard Butcher, the chairman of Chase, complaining about the new tax law. Starting next year, large banks (over $500 million in assets) will no longer get a deduction on their annual provision for loan losses—the money that they set aside on their books for loans that are likely to go bad later. Instead, banks will get tax deductions only on actual write-offs—on loans that they conclusively believe have gone bad. Butcher's point was that the new tax law would cause banks "to take Chapter 11." This is the sort of absurdity that the metaphysics of bank accounting has produced. A bank is either in bad shape with its loans or it isn't. Tax laws can't change that reality. But in this case, they may force banks to concede their condition on their books—a bad thing, according to Butcher.

Sampson is right when he says that we all have a vested interest in hope. But I doubt that bankers have really ever fooled anyone but themselves and perhaps the regulators. Hope hasn't blinded investors, who have always been smart enough to see through accounting fiction. For years bank stocks have been valued by the market far lower than the stocks of most other corporations. Investors know that Third World loans will never be repaid, and they've valued the shares of banks that have made them accordingly. Long before BankAmerica recognized a shattering bad-debt loss in the second quarter of 1986 (total deficit: $640 million), it was trading at a discount of about one-third of its book value. In other words, the market says that the bank is worth only 60 percent to 70 percent of what the bank's accountants say.

One immediate result of recognizing the true value of their assets would be that banks would be free to work out deals that would help everyone. They could allow Latin American countries to buy back their debt at a discount. Or let them trade their debt for equity. Or banks could "securitize" their debt—package it, discount it, and sell it to individual investors. BankAmerica, for example, could take shaky Mexican loans that it's currently carrying on its books at $1 billion, package them in 1,000 units, and sell each unit to investors for, say, $750,000. Fannie Mae and Ginnie Mae already do this sort of thing with mortgages, and GMAC does it with car loans. The hitch right now is that this "securitizing" would require BankAmerica to admit that the $1 billion in loans it's carrying on its books is really worth just $750 million.

I think that banks—and other companies—ought to chuck the accounting metaphysics. They should level with us. We know what's going on anyway. Leveling will make the bankers feel better and let us all get on with the business at hand—including Senator Bradley's proposal. It's time for the accounting version of the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration bill: an amnesty for all bankers who have been trying to kid us into believing that their Third World loans were solid.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

ON THE HILL

DON'T WRITE

DOES IT MAKE sense to write to Congress expressing your views? Judging from the experience of University of Minnesota law professor Victor Kramer, exercising this fundamental democratic right may do more harm than good for the cause you wish to promote.

The House of Representatives passed its version of the tax reform bill last December. Among the loopholes the bill closed was a special tax exemption for retirement plans of college professors. Shortly after Christmas, Kramer received a form letter from the organization administering his own pension plan, urging all professors to write their senators demanding that the Senate restore the treasured break.

Kramer, a believer in tax reform, was outraged. So on January 6 he wrote to all 20 members of the Senate Finance Committee urging that they *not* restore this loophole. "If our nation is to be rescued from the individual selfishness of its organized citizens," Kramer wrote, "someone has both to speak out and to vote for fairness and equity."

On January 23 Senator Dave Durenberger, Republican

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of Minnesota, wrote: "I understand your concern over the possible effects of the changes proposed by President Reagan and the House Ways and Means Committee." Like other senatorial replies, Durenberger's was artfully phrased to suggest that he sympathized with what he thought was the letter-writer's position, without actually promising to support it. He wrote: "[These] plans are important savings vehicles for employees of educational and non-profit organizations. . . . The government should encourage Americans to prepare for their retirement, not hinder saving. . . . You can be certain that . . . any proposed changes in the treatment of retirement savings plans will receive my careful attention."

Kramer tried again on January 28. Enclosing a copy of the original letter and response, he wrote: "If you will reread . . . my earlier letter to you, you will immediately understand that I have no 'concern over the possible effects of the change proposed by the House Ways and Means Committee'; my concern was that you will reject those changes."

Durenberger's answer was posted February 13. It got off to an unfortunate start. "I am deeply for the mix-up with your original correspondence," he wrote. Well, OK, anybody can drop a word by mistake. But Durenberger continued: "I would now like to respond to your comments. . . . I share your concern over the effects that this change may have on the higher education pension system," and so on. He reassured Kramer that he was "especially reluctant" to close the loophole, and believed the professors' pension system "has several unique characteristics that should allow it to retain special tax status." He concluded, "Thank you for your patience, Vic. I hope you will stay in touch."

Fear not, Senator Durenberger. Kramer wrote back on February 18. "Your staff still assumes I am opposed to the House tax reform bill on the grounds advanced by my 'union.' . . . As I have tried to make clear, I do not oppose the restrictive changes on teachers' pensions." In fact, he repeated for the third time, he supported these changes.

At least Durenberger stayed with the correspondence until the bitter end. On March 6, he wrote: "I think I have finally gotten this mess straightened out! I must tell you, however, that you are the only person who written me in favor of repealing the tax-exempt status of TIAA. Therein lies the root of this confusion. You simply caught me off guard."

MEANWHILE, other senators' letter-answering machines were joining in the confusion. On February 6 Senator David Boren, Democrat of Oklahoma, wrote to Kramer: "I certainly understand your opposition to proposals to impose federal income taxes on the pension funds of colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. . . . I have been a strong opponent of taxing such annuity programs. . . . Knowing your comments is a great help to me." Boren got back a letter similar to Kramer's second volley to Durenberger, but never replied.

On February 12 Senator Bill Bradley wrote to Kramer that he "appreciated the opportunity to learn your views on this important issue." He assured Kramer, "I have been in contact with officials of TIAA-CREF," the organization lobbying to save the loophole, and promised he would "carefully consider their concerns." He noted that his own original Fair Tax Act did not close the loophole, and wrote, "I am hopeful that the Fair Tax will continue to serve as a model of tax reform legislation."

When Kramer protested in a February 20 letter that Bradley had misunderstood, he got back the senator's ultimate form letter. "I was very sorry to learn of your disappointment with my reply to your letter," Bradley wrote. "My office currently receives at least 8,000 letters per week . . . [and] I make every effort to be responsive. . . . I value the views and opinions expressed in the mail that I receive, and I hope that you will continue to keep in touch."

In his March 11 letter, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, exhorted Kramer to fight harder to *keep* the teachers' pension tax break! "You are so right to be concerned . . . benefits will inevitably be reduced. . . . I will do whatever I can to temper or stop this plan. . . . But do understand what we are up against. . . . This will not be an easy victory. I will need your help and support. It is imperative that you communicate your concerns to other members of the Finance Committee and the Senate, and to the President."

In response to Kramer's usual protest, Moynihan sent back a second letter on April 11 that was identical to his first one. Kramer tried again. The third time around, on April 23, Moynihan finally caught on. Pleading the volume of his mail—over 8,500 pieces of mail on this issue of the taxation of TIAA-CREF alone—he apologized and said, "Please be assured that I have recorded your views and will keep them in mind." No exhortation to redouble one's efforts.

NO ONE BELIEVES that senators read their mail. They do, however, usually have someone tally it up. In Moynihan's mail count, Kramer's letters almost certainly came out as two votes against tax reform and just one vote for. Kramer's letter also probably counted as a vote against tax reform in the offices of the majority of Finance Committee senators who never replied to it. The most depressing lesson of Professor Kramer's experience is that legislators are so overwhelmed by mail from organized lobbying campaigns that they automatically assume anyone writing in on an issue about which people have been mobilized by a lobby must be writing to support the lobby's point of view.

There's a happy ending, though. Although the Finance Committee dropped the loophole-closing measure, the House-Senate conference committee restored it, and it was included in the final tax reform bill that is now the law of the land.

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

Robert S. McIntyre is director of federal tax policy of Citizens for Tax Justice.

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How to get a Nobel prize.

POP GOES ELIE WIESEL

"I WAS OF COURSE very stunned and grateful, and melancholy," Elie Wiesel told the *New York Times* about his initial reaction to winning the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize. "I fell back into the mood of Yom Kippur, serious reflections about my parents and my grandparents. It took me half an hour to get out of it." But when Wiesel finally came to, he told a press conference in New York, "There are no coincidences. If it [winning the prize] happens after Yom Kippur here, then some of my friends and myself have prayed well."

Actually, they did a little more than pray. Over the past several years, a few of Wiesel's friends have circled the globe in an intensive effort to win him the prize. Sigmund Strochlitz, who owns a Ford dealership in New London, Connecticut, has directed the offensive. A survivor of Auschwitz, Strochlitz has visited the halls of Congress, the West German Bundestag, the French Assembly, and the Norwegian Parliament on Wiesel's behalf.

It might sound difficult to lobby for the Nobel Peace Prize. In reality, it's not so tough. According to the rules of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, several categories of persons are eligible to make nominations. Parliamentary representatives, judges, academics, and former Nobel laureates are among those entitled to send letters of nomination to the committee in Oslo. They're due by February 1. Strochlitz's strategy has been to solicit these letters by the bushel. He's succeeded in getting hundreds of them, including nominations from François Mitterrand and former Peace Prize winners Henry Kissinger, Lech Walesa, and Mother Theresa.

Wiesel's supporters have concentrated much of their energy on the U.S. Senate. One Senate aide described their campaign as "relentless and heavy-handed." "Strochlitz would show up every winter and say it's time to write letters again," one staffer said. "He'd say, 'You did it last year. It's time to do it again.' He'd get the senators to send 'Dear Colleague' letters to each other in an ever-widening circle." Strochlitz, a close friend of Wiesel's, denies doing any campaigning.

Here's how it worked. Strochlitz asked Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, for example, to nominate Wiesel, and to request similar letters from ten of his colleagues. Strochlitz provided Moynihan with the names. Of course, many of the legislators Moynihan asked had no idea they could nominate anyone for a Nobel Prize. And a few hardly knew who Elie Wiesel was. They letters they sent are perhaps less flowery than some the Nobel Committee has received in the past:

U.S. Senate
January 26, 1984

Members of the Committee:

It is my honor to propose Mr. Elie Wiesel for the 1984 Nobel Prize for Peace. As you well know, Mr. Wiesel has dedicated most of his life toward the goal of peace throughout the world. In my opinion, you could not go wrong by awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to this most deserving gentleman.

With respect,
Barry Goldwater

By Strochlitz's count, more than 50 senators and 140 representatives have written to Oslo on Wiesel's behalf. More than 70 members of the West German Bundestag have also nominated Wiesel. After getting a few dozen senators under his belt, Strochlitz began grouping them in interesting ways. One year he got the entire Massachusetts congressional delegation to nominate Wiesel. Another year he solicited letters from all the members of the Senate Banking Committee.

STROCHLITZ WAS helped by John Silber, the president of Boston University, where Wiesel teaches. Silber called Strochlitz "the real strategist and campaigner." "Strochlitz did everything in his power," Silber said. "He would say to me: 'John, you know these people in Congress.' I'd write to them and send copies of their responses to Strochlitz, so he could keep track of everything we were doing." Silber said that he is especially delighted at Wiesel finally winning the prize, since it is the second such award bestowed upon someone associated with his school. Martin Luther King, who won the Peace Prize in 1964, was a student at Boston University during the 1950s.

In Silber's letters to the Nobel Committee, he argued that Wiesel was not just a spokesman for survivors of the Holocaust, but a voice for victims everywhere. Each year that he renominated Wiesel, he wrote to the committee about some new effort of Wiesel's on behalf of the oppressed—whether his work for Cambodian boat people, or Soviet Jews, or Arab refugees, or the disappeared in Argentina. A typical letter from Silber to the committee points out that "Wiesel traveled at considerable risk to his personal health and safety into the jungles of Honduras, where he met with Miskito Indians." Attached was an op-ed piece Wiesel published in the *Los Angeles Times*, detailing the Miskitos' plight. As Silber put it one year, "I am sure that my letter will not be the first, nor indeed the only such letter to reach you. . . ."

Another of Silber's tactics has been to suggest appropriate anniversaries for the Nobel Committee to make use of in honoring his friend. In 1984 he wrote of the connections between Wiesel and Orwell. The following year Silber's letter reminded the committee that it was the 40th anniversary of the liberation of the death camps. Wiesel's friends searched endlessly for a new "peg" on which to hang the same old story.

Silber said Wiesel never inquired about the effort to get him the prize, though he was aware of it. "He never asked anybody, never asked me, never asked Strochlitz," Silber said. "We said, 'Stand still, Elie. Step aside, do your work. Don't worry about our work, which is to make them [the Nobel Committee] aware of you.' " Silber added, "Nobody wins unless the Nobel Committee knows about them." Silber and Strochlitz both vociferously decline any share of the credit for Wiesel's prize in 1986. "That would be like the trainer claiming he's the race horse," Silber said. "We

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may have fed the oats, and curried the flanks. But that horse could run."

According to all published reports, Wiesel has been on the Nobel Committee's short list for the past few years. And this year members of the jury thought it necessary to make a non-controversial selection. Last year's prize, which was shared by Soviet doctor Yevgeny I. Chazov, of the Boston-based Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, humiliated the committee when it was revealed that Chazov had denounced laureate Andrei Sakharov several years earlier. In 1986 it was the West's turn to be mollified.

Looking down the list of past winners, one wonders what the prize is actually for. Some years it appears to reward good deeds on a large scale. Other times, it seems to honor political leadership. On a few occasions, such as 1973, when it was awarded jointly to Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, it has seemed closer to a war prize than a peace prize. These days, it's a rather amorphous accolade—sort of a moral hall of fame for the indisputably decent.

Whatever the Nobel Peace Prize signifies, it's clear that people lobby for it. Nobody seems quite sure what Japanese prime minister Eisaku Sato won his Nobel for in 1974, but it is well known that he hired a public relations firm to help his campaign along. Jimmy Carter, Armand Hammer, and Indira Gandhi have been among the more recent campaigners who appear to have failed in drives for the prize. (Hammer reportedly once sent Ann Landers a jade necklace with a note asking if she could help him get nominated for the prize.) Mohandas Gandhi never campaigned for, and never got, the most coveted prize on planet earth.

Because the prize has such prestige, it's a bit disquieting to discover that the winners actually wanted it. Nobody wants to think that the Mother Theresas of the world bid for earthly reward. In fact, Mother Theresa never did campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize. But she seems to be the exception, Elie Wiesel the rule.

JACOB WEISBERG

Jacob Weisberg is a former TNR reporter-researcher.

The worst campaign in America.

THE SNIT BROTHERS

Los Angeles

Representative Ed Zschau, the Republican Senate candidate in California, would love to make personal contact with Democratic Senator Alan Cranston, his opponent. Lots of luck. The closest he's come was on October 1 when a radio interviewer in Los Angeles left him on hold while talking to Cranston on the other line. Why don't I put you two guys together for a quickie debate? the interviewer asked Cranston. "Thank you very much," said Cranston. "I've got to run." He hung up. Cranston says there's no percentage in debating Zschau, who trails him in polls. "I don't know of anybody who ever lost a campaign for refusing to debate," he told the *Los Angeles Times*. "But I think Gerald Ford lost the presidency because of his debate remark on television."

Yes, the California Senate campaign is just as awful as you've heard. Televised debates, with tedious questions from reporters and silly posturing by the candidates, would be a godsend here. Anything to make the candidates stop pouting. Zschau is in a snit because he wanted the campaign to be, as his campaign manager Ron Smith puts it, "a high-toned, high-level kind of campaign . . . a battle of ideas." It isn't. "Cranston took that away from us" by running tough, negative ads against Zschau beginning in June. OK, but why is Cranston in a huff? Zschau's using "the technique of the big lie," Cranston declares. "That's what [Richard Nixon] did, and that's what's occurring here." Cranston's position is that Zschau is too unsavory to debate. "He's lied about Cranston's record, and we don't debate with liars," explains Kam Kuwata, Cranston's press secretary.

This campaign doesn't pit Zschau against Cranston at all. It pits Zschau's ads against Cranston's ads. The TV spots are not only the medium, but the message as well. This surprises no one in California, where events such as campaign rallies and kaffeeklatsches are rarities. And reporters adjust. Rather than bother with the candidates, they concentrate on reporting about their ads.

Zschau and Cranston do three things: (1) hold press conferences to attract media attention; (2) attend fundraisers to get money to pay for television spots; and (3) film the spots and shovel them out to TV stations. But even the press conferences frequently don't deal with real issues—arms control, defense spending, taxes, the deficit, abortion. They deal with TV spots. Both sides call reporters together to "preview" new ads, which generates print and TV news stories about the spots. Zschau and Cranston also hold press conferences to denounce the other guy's commercials. Zschau waxed indignant last summer about a Cranston commercial labeling him an ally of Jerry Falwell and Senator Jesse Helms in supporting the white regime in South Africa. Cranston flew into a dither for reporters over Zschau ads zinging him on drugs, terrorism, and the death penalty. On the basis of these ads, Cranston declared, "I don't think [Zschau] is qualified to be senator."

WHAT'S IN THE ADS? The usual sleight-of-hand, hype, and stress on peripheral points. Take the Cranston spot on Zschau and South Africa. Contrary to what the ad suggests, Zschau isn't buddy-buddy with Falwell and Helms on South Africa. He actually favors economic sanctions, but sanctions that are less severe than those Cranston proposes. Cranston insists that the ad is legitimate because Zschau, like Falwell and Helms, op-

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poses full divestiture. By the way, Zschau used his press conference on the South Africa ad to publicize an unfavorable piece written about Cranston in 1983 by Carl Cannon of the *San Jose Mercury-News*. Cheap shots are Cranston's style, said Zschau, pointing to the article. It recounted a visit by Cranston in 1964 to Tom Braden, then the editor of a small California newspaper and now the host of a political talk show on Cable News Network. Cranston showed Braden a photo of an expected opponent in the Democratic senatorial primary that year in a Mexican hotel room with a young woman who was not his wife. Braden regarded the incident as a smear attempt. Cranston has denied it happened.

The Zschau ads on Cranston contend that "for 18 years Alan Cranston has missed or voted against virtually every tough law" on drug enforcement and terrorism. This isn't quite true. Cranston didn't support every anti-drug or anti-terrorist scheme, but he did back some. Cranston responded with some ads of his own. "Ed Zschau thinks you'll believe anything, just because he puts it on television," the spot says. "The fact is, Alan Cranston has sponsored or voted for 23 major anti-drug bills, including . . ." Then the names of ten bills roll over the screen. The ad ends with another kick. "By the way, there's one thing the Zschau ads don't tell you," the announcer says. "In 1985 Zschau voted against funds for the Drug Enforcement Administration. That's right. In 1985 Zschau voted against drug enforcement funds." This referred to a vote for a large appropriations measure. Zschau aides said he favored the level of spending in the bill, but not the specific DEA cut. Exactly what voters make of this frivolous charge and countercharge on drugs is anybody's guess. What's important is not that Zschau is for tougher drug enforcement, if he is, but that he puts tougher anti-drug ads on TV.

YET ANOTHER Zschau 30-second ad has attracted attention. This one, broadcast in October, presents what looks like a white-haired news anchorman providing a quickie update. "In Washington," the fellow says, "despite an overwhelming vote by the United States Senate to impose the death penalty for drug pushers who willfully murder, California Senator Alan Cranston voted no. The vote shouldn't come as a surprise to Californians. Cranston also voted against the death penalty for terrorists and hijackers who murder." Cranston campaign manager Darry Sragow called a press conference to criticize the ad, but stronger complaints yet came from TV station managers who claimed it was misleading. At first viewing, it was. After Zschau press secretary Sandra Conlin screened the ad for me, she asked if I'd noticed the disclaimer at the beginning of the spot saying, "News Dramatization . . . Paid for by the Ed Zschau for U.S. Senate Committee." It appeared for four seconds, she said, not just the required three. Fine, but I hadn't noticed it, and I doubt if casual viewers would.

The Zschau-Cranston race is now in its third phase. The first ran from last year to late this spring, a period in which nearly everyone figured that Cranston was ripe for defeat in seeking a fourth term—too liberal, too old, too foolish (dying his hair a garish orange) in his quest for the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination. Joseph Cerrell, a prominent Democratic consultant, says he laughed at Sragow for quitting his law practice last year to run the Cranston campaign. "You're going to be the social director on the Titanic," Cerrell said. Well, Sragow hasn't been. The reason is the second phase, during which Cranston soared.

THE DAY AFTER Zschau won the Republican nomination in June, Cranston was on the air with a TV spot tarring Zschau as a flip-flopper. (Cranston was ready with a different ad if Bruce Herschensohn, a conservative television commentator, had beaten Zschau.) The ad, produced by the hot media consultants of 1986, David Doak and Robert Shrum, was extremely effective because it was true. Zschau has flip-flopped on the MX, on aid to the *contras*, on raising taxes, to name a few. In July he toured Israel, two months after voting in favor of military weaponry for Saudi Arabia. Upon return, he said he might or might not back more arms sales to Arab countries. A few days later he ruled out voting for such sales. This agonizing flip-flop was performed in the full glare of media attention. On top of everything else, Zschau found himself arguing in the press more with Cranston's resourceful spokesman, Kam Kuwata, than with Cranston. That's not a winning formula.

Enter phase three, which ends November 4, election day. In September, when Zschau went on TV with his negative spots, he began to make a contest of it. According to one poll, the gap between Zschau and Cranston was 22 percentage points (in Cranston's favor) in August. It's narrowed considerably since. For the new spots, Zschau changed media consultants, recruiting Sig Rogich of Las Vegas, the creator of President Reagan's "morning in America" commercials in 1984. And he brought in two more of Reagan's political advisers, Stuart Spencer and Kenneth Khachigian. They persuaded him to abandon his pitch to baby boomers and moderates and to go after the traditional Republican base, conservatives. Zschau had assumed conservatives, eager to oust Cranston, would fall in place behind him. But given his views, this was naive. "He's the epitome of the new Republican," says Smith, "good on social issues, an economic conservative, moderate on foreign policy, which means be tough but don't spend too much." Packaged this way, Zschau sounds as much like Cranston as Reagan, and conservatives didn't much like the package. State Senator H. L. Richardson, a leading GOP conservative, said he wouldn't vote for Zschau because "choosing the lesser of two evils is still a selection of evil."

Drawing conservatives to Zschau is no cinch, particularly since trying to out-hawk Cranston on the defense issue is barely credible. Zschau is closer to Cranston than to Reagan on defense. He and Cranston favor SALT II, oppose the MX (Zschau supported it briefly in 1985 while

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Reagan was summitting in Geneva), vote for deep cuts in the level of military spending, and advocate a nuclear freeze. His only Reaganite stand consists of support for Star Wars, but even that is tepid. Small wonder that some conservatives are willing to endure six final years of Cranston, 72, against the possibility of a long Senate career for Zschau, 46, a Stanford Business School professor and Silicon Valley entrepreneur before he was elected to the House in 1982.

To overcome conservative resistance, Zschau brought Reagan to California in early September. Reagan said "any differences" between him and Zschau were "trivial." Vice President George Bush came in late September. He said Zschau is "with us on most of the fundamentals." Herschensohn, vanquished in the primary, has campaigned vigorously for Zschau. Khachigian cajoled Bay Buchanan Jackson, Herschensohn's campaign manager and the sister of Patrick J. Buchanan, to join the Zschau campaign in October. "This is ABC time," Khachigian told her, "Anybody But Cranston."

Together, Zschau and Cranston will spend more than $20 million on the campaign. Zschau alone will lavish $1 million on TV ads in the last week. That strategy, the million-dollar blitz, worked for him in the primary. He never led in a single pre-primary poll, but managed to beat Herschensohn, 37 to 30 percent.

This time there's a big difference. Herschensohn was broke; Cranston can match Zschau dollar for dollar, ad for ad. And Zschau is stiff and self-conscious on TV. Still, by late October, he had pulled nearly even with Cranston. Smith says Zschau will surge ahead the last weekend of the race, whether or not Cranston accedes to a debate. The sad part about this non-campaign is that the fate both candidates richly deserve will be meted out to only one of them. Too bad they both can't lose.

FRED BARNES

Run hard, not scared.

LIBERALS WHO WIN

Philadelphia

As the audience of Democratic donors finishes dessert in the private upstairs dining room at Harry's Bar and Grill, Bill Gray, the local congressman, is in his preacher mode. "Who do you want helping pick federal judges," Gray thunders, "Strom Thurmond or Ted Kennedy?" The 40 or so professionals whom Gray has assembled, at $250 a plate, murmur approval, in the manner of a Baptist congregation. As it happens, the audience at this unusual event is black, and the boyish Senate candidate standing by the piano waiting to go on is white. But the candidate is unusual too. "Blacks haven't seen a white guy like Bob Edgar for a long time," says Jerry Mondesire, Gray's chief of staff.

Bob Edgar is one of the most resolutely liberal members of the Watergate class of 1974. That, by itself, is unremarkable. What is remarkable is that Edgar keeps getting reelected in a district with a Republican registration advantage of 210,000 to 90,000. Before Edgar, the 7th Pennsylvania District, mostly in suburban Delaware County, last sent a Democrat in 1858. Edgar, an ordained Methodist minister, has accomplished this feat by appealing to the suburban Republican and independent voters on the basis of personal integrity, good government, environment, and war-and-peace issues, while rallying every possible Democratic vote in the blue-collar wards along the Delaware River by stressing practical economics. A soft-spoken idealist, he is the sort of Democrat who attracts droves of eager young volunteers. In 1984 Reagan swept the 7th District by over 61,000 votes. Edgar survived that tide, holding the seat by a bare 412.

If Edgar can duplicate this feat statewide, Pennsylvania will have its first Democratic senator since Joe Clark was defeated in 1968. But the state is the mirror image of the 7th District. With an 800,000 Democratic registration advantage, it keeps electing Republicans to statewide office. Except for Governor Milton Shapp (1970-78), it has not had a Democratic governor or senator in two decades.

EDGAR IS ONE of six or seven surprisingly liberal Democratic long shots who have some prospect of upsetting a first-term Republican incumbent opponent, in this case Senator Arlen Specter. If Democrats win back control of the Senate in November, they will be better positioned to stymie Reagan's final two years, and they will get a badly needed infusion of new energy and conviction for 1988. The Pennsylvania Senate race suggests in miniature the issues involved in a Democratic comeback nationally—the respective roles of organization, activism, money, incumbency, technology, and ideology. If there were any congressional district in the country where the conventional prescription for Democratic renaissance—centrism—should be indicated, it would be Edgar's. But Edgar has thrived by winning the allegiance of Democratic partisans based on his liberalism, and of independent Republicans based on his integrity—not by moving right.

On a statewide basis, however, Edgar faces an uphill fight. His problem is not liberal ideology, which has helped him build a dedicated following. Specter's advantage over Edgar lies primarily in money and partisan organization. As an incumbent with a flair for publicity (see "Media Specter," TNR, September 30, 1985), he began the campaign with almost universal statewide name recognition, compared to Edgar's 30 percent. He will spend $6 million to $7 million in the campaign, against Edgar's projected $2.5 million. This is the pattern in nearly every other Senate race where a Democrat is challenging a Republican incumbent.

Specter, like other Republican candidates, also benefits immensely from the superior national Republican Party

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apparatus. In virtually every state, there is a functioning GOP state party, with its own professional staff and fund-raising capability. Most Republican state parties maintain up-to-date voter lists and have the resources for well-targeted get-out-the-vote drives. For Democrats, voter "targeting," pioneered by the National Committee for an Effective Congress, involves using a computer printout showing voter turnout and baseline Democratic vote by precinct, and concentrating candidate energy accordingly. Republicans have moved to the next generation of targeting, using up-to-date demographic overlays and finely tuned direct mail and phone appeals. If Democrats can now target voters, one precinct at a time, Republicans have the capability to do demographic targeting, one *voter* at a time.

During the 1985-86 election cycle, the Republican National Committee will funnel about $17 million of "soft money" (money that does not show up in Federal Campaign Finance reports) to state Republican parties. The RNC has paid the salaries of large numbers of state party staff, and even local telephone solicitors, as well as sponsoring substantial polling, something the Democratic National Committee cannot begin to match. The DNC only recently launched a pilot program, temporarily paying salaries of a fund-raiser and a political strategist, in 16 states. It has given small grants to several state parties, totaling about $160,000, to develop voter files, and has begun to make its own lists of contributors (500,000 versus 1.7 million GOP donors) to state parties and candidates. But overall, the disparity in RNC versus DNC state party building outlays is at least 10-to-1. In about 20 states, the official Democratic Party is little more than a letterhead operation.

A generation ago, as Edgar finance chief John Briscoe observes, Pennsylvania had an old-style Democratic apparatus, with some 55,000 patronage jobs plus a formidable union presence. Today most government jobs are civil service, and unions are weaker. A top-heavy State Democratic Committee of 150 members doesn't connect to very much. There are still functioning Democratic organizations in some wards in some big cities, but "they are like beads on a string without the string," says Briscoe. "After that, you're floating in the mainstream of modern politics. It's all candidate-based."

EDGAR HOPES TO recoup by relying on the traditional Democratic strong suit—people over money. Statewide, the Edgar campaign boasts 265 phones manned by volunteers. The Steelworker rank and file run a western Pennsylvania boiler-room bank for Edgar, with 85 phones working every evening. Another big source of volunteers is the Pennsylvania Public Interest Coalition (PennPIC), a statewide "citizen action" organization whose door-to-door canvass operation raises small donations from about 250,000 Pennsylvanians. In the past two years, PennPIC, like counterpart organizations in ten other states, has turned to electoral politics. PennPIC's big issue is environmentalism with a blue-collar twist—right-to-know legislation, toxic waste cleanups, public utility reform. In Pennsylvania, where streams sometimes run orange and part of Scranton boils its drinking water, these are not limousine-liberal issues. Edgar is a real favorite of PennPIC, which has made his campaign its priority activity this year. George Tomaccio, Edgar's field director, says, "You get other organizations to organize themselves around your campaign. If you tie up with them you can turn their organization into yours."

It remains to be seen whether this tactic can compensate for Specter's overwhelming advantage in incumbency, money, and campaign technology. Specter's main negative is that he is widely perceived as somewhat opportunist. A relative liberal by current Republican standards, he has been willing to give the White House his vote when it is needed. The *Baltimore Sun* caught him boasting to a labor group that he had opposed "double breasting" (allowing a union contractor to also operate non-union), while assuring a contractors' association that he supported it. A series of Edgar campaign ads emphasizes Specter's tendency to vote both ways. The spots show a bust of a Roman senator, gradually accumulating cracks. The announcer ticks off flip-flop votes, concluding, "Senator Arlen Specter. He's just not what he's cracked up to be" as the statue finally cracks apart and pulverizes. At this writing, Edgar has gradually narrowed Specter's lead from over 20 points in the polls to the 8 to 14 point range.

THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE race suggests that much of the Democrats' current distress reflects the disparity between the two parties' money and organization, not a greater public sympathy for Republican philosophy. In the past six years, Republicans have won over 70 percent of the very close House and Senate races, in large part because of their superior ability to pour in money and finely tuned voter targeting in the last weeks of a campaign.

Ideologically, polls continue to show that overwhelming majorities of the public favor a kind of pragmatic liberalism. As Republican strategist David Gergen wrote in the June-July 1985 issue of *Public Opinion*, Reagan's biggest failure has been his inability to convert American public opinion to his philosophy. Gergen cites polls showing that the proportion of Americans who think social spending should not be cut is 62 percent, compared to 51 percent in 1982. Only 16 percent think military spending should be increased, compared to 61 percent in 1981. The fraction of Americans who distrust government has also declined; Gergen credits that, ironically, to Reagan himself, though any of several effective Democratic governors might share in the credit.

Significantly, too, a count of the 70 House races since 1974 where Democrats have ousted incumbents or picked up non-safe open seats indicates that the overwhelming majority ran as liberals or moderate-liberals. Several, such as Bob Edgar or North Dakota's Byron Dorgan or Kansas's Dan Glickman, survived 20- and 30-point Reagan landslides in their districts, by running as economic progressives. It simply isn't true that Democratic activists are too liberal for the party electorate, and hence nominate candi-

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dates who are too liberal for the country. Democrats have been the majority party when they have managed to unite middle-class, working-class, and poor voters around the implicit proposition that the free market alone cannot provide economic opportunity and security for ordinary Americans, and that government can be a useful counterweight. The Democratic Party has gotten into trouble when that economic coalition has broken down over social or foreign policy divisions, allowing Republicans to build a coalition of the middle and upper classes.

The Democratic Party has increasingly failed to mobilize its natural base of non-rich voters. Precinct voting data in a typical congressional race shows an almost perfectly inverse relationship between Democratic support and turnout figures. The precincts with the most reliable Democratic vote, generally low-income ones, almost invariably have turnout percentages down around 40 percent. The precincts that deliver 2-to-1 for Republican candidates usually have 70 or 80 percent of the electorate turning out.

In the new applied political science of "targeting," campaign strategists urge the candidate not to spend time in the low-turnout districts, which are considered either hopeless or beyond the ability of a single non-presidential candidate to influence, and to concentrate on "persuadable" swing districts. This strategy is sensible enough for an individual House or Senate candidate, but over time it means that nobody is thinking very hard about how to rouse the base of potential Democratic voters who are disaffected from politics altogether. Here again, Republicans massively outspend Democrats on voter registration and targeting.

THE RELATIONSHIP between ideology and party organization is often misunderstood. Historically, the Democratic Party has been a messy alliance between ideological progressives (usually reformers) and lunch-bucket regulars. The party needs both sorts of Democrat to win. Since the belated discovery by political scientists that old-fashioned machines were really instruments of a rough populist democracy, it has become fashionable to lament the decline of organization politics. It is de rigeur here to quote Martin Lomasny, the boss of Boston's West End, who advised the young Lincoln Steffens that what the urban poor required was "none of your law and your justice, but help." Likewise, James Q. Wilson's *The Amateur Democrat*, which studied postwar local reform politics, essentially confirmed George Plunkitt's 1905 warning that "reformers are morning glories."

Lately this line of analysis has taken on ideological overtones, in which self-defeating ultraliberalism and self-defeating anti-organization politics are twinned as "McGovernism." In this neoconservative account of where the Democrats went wrong, the post-1968 party made the dual mistake of locking out the regulars with its procedural reforms and scaring off the lunch-bucket voters with far-left ideology. Some neoconservative analysts, like Professor Nelson Polsby, even attribute the weakness of recent Democratic presidential candidates almost exclusively to the nominating reforms, which opened the doors to outsider activists, outsider candidates, and "entourage-centered" rather than "party-centered" campaigns. The remedy, in this view, is re-regularization of the party, moderation of its message, and a rejection of narrow, interest group politics.

THIS ANALYSIS SEEMS about half right. As the Edgar-Specter tilt shows, the party desperately needs the means to compete organizationally. Political scientist David Price, former staff director of the party's counter-reformist Hunt Commission and currently a candidate for Congress from North Carolina, writes in his excellent book, *Bringing Back the Parties*, that parties are simply more effective devices than interest groups or lone-ranger candidacies for advancing and integrating the material interests of society's worse-off. But that does not mean that the Democratic electoral base is likely to be roused by determined moderation, or that it is possible to resurrect old-fashioned machine politics. Reform has burst forth periodically precisely because organization politics was so vulnerable to ideological and material corruption. In voter registration politics, it is party regulars who derail mass mobilizations of new Democratic voters, who can't be controlled. Ideologically, the party indeed needs to downplay its more extreme foreign policy views—foreign policy doesn't win elections anyway—but not its economic populism. And it needs to broadcast that lunch-bucket appeal to the entire populace, not just to organized groups.

In this respect, there is room for some guarded optimism in 1986. Pragmatic liberalism is still the majority philosophy in America. The Democratic Party seems finally to have surmounted its Vietnam-era schisms. Edgar is a foreign policy liberal, but if he wins, it will be on economics. In the Pennsylvania campaign, ideological liberals of the sort who were on the barricades two decades ago are working side by side with hard hats to rebuild a party organization. George Tomaccio says, "You need a Bob Edgar to get me and a steelworker to work together." PennPIC, like the great progressive-era citizen organizations of the upper Midwest, seems a wonderful example of the reformer-as-regular. The Hunt Commission counterreforms strike a good balance between regularism and open participation. At the national level, the trick will be for the candidates of 1988 to rally both insiders and outsiders, as Kennedy and Roosevelt did so well, and Carter and Mondale did so badly.

The Democratic predicament, then, involves the traditional stuff of politics—organization, money, technology, believable candidates, and voter animation—more than it does outworn ideology. What the Democrats need, in short, are both serious party building *and* a progressive economic message to cement their natural base. As Bob Edgar declares, echoing Harry Truman, "Given a choice between a Republican and a Republican, people will vote Republican every time."

ROBERT KUTTNER

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How would you respond?

THE JEWELER'S DILEMMA

A bitter controversy has broken out in Washington over a column by Richard Cohen in the Washington Post Magazine. *Cohen reports that certain jewelry stores in Washington admit customers only through a buzzer system, and that some store owners use this system to exclude young black males on the grounds that these people are most likely to commit a robbery. Cohen defends this practice. He points out that "young black males commit an inordinate amount of urban crime," that black potential victims as well as white ones often act on this awareness, and that under such circumstances, "the mere recognition of race as a factor . . . is not in itself racism."*

If you were such a jewelry store owner, would you use your buzzer system to exclude young black males? You might take other factors into account—not just age and sex, but style of dress and the time of day—but would you ever take race into consideration as well? Whatever you yourself would do, is taking race into consideration in these circumstances racist? Understandable? Both? Neither?

Suppose you are a cabdriver cruising for customers in the middle of the night. Or a woman about to get into an elevator with a stranger in a residential apartment building. How does your decision or your analysis change in these circumstances?

We asked some people to reflect briefly on these questions. Here are their responses:

THE INTELLIGENT BAYESIAN

Men are not gods. Therefore, men face challenges gods would not have to endure—ignorance and uncertainty. To make decisions, we need to have information about the world around us. The information we gather is not only imperfect, it is costly as well. So we learn to economize by guessing, prejudging, and using stereotypes.

Imagine you are challenged to a basketball game and must select five out of 20 people who appear to be equal in *every* respect except race and sex. There are five black and five white females, five black and five white males. You have no information about their basketball proficiency. There is a million-dollar prize for the contest. How would you choose a team? If you thought basketball skills were randomly distributed by race and sex, you would randomly select. Most people would perceive a strong associative relationship between basketball skills on the one hand, and race and sex on the other. Most would confine their choice to males, and their choice would be dominated by black males.

Can we say such a person is a sexist / racist? An alternative answer is that he is behaving like an intelligent Bayesian (Sir Thomas Bayes, the father of statistics). Inexpensively obtained information about race and sex is a proxy for information that costs more to obtain, namely, basketball proficiency.

There is a large class of human behavior that generally falls into the same testing procedure. Doctors can predict the probability of hypertension by knowing race, and osteoporosis by knowing sex. A white jeweler who does not open his door to young black males cannot be labeled a racist any more than a black taxi driver who refuses to pick up young black males at night. Black females and white females and white males commit holdups, but in this world of imperfect information cabdrivers and jewelers play the odds. To ask them to behave differently is to disarm them. The other side of the argument is that they are losing money if they err—i.e., turning away an honest customer.

People can be stupid Bayesians. In 1971 I owned a house in Washington's exclusive Chevy Chase suburb. My Saturday chore was to pick up motorists' litter along the side of my house. One time I was approached by a gentleman who stopped his car and said, "Sir, when you're finished working at this house, could you come over to my place and work for me?" I politely told the gentleman I would not have time, since the rest of the day would be spent working on my Ph.D. dissertation. The gentlemen apologized profusely. (My wife once encountered another incompetent Bayesian. Awaiting a bus during a downpour, she was offered a ride to Chevy Chase Circle by a black woman who turned out to be a domestic servant. "Don't you just hate working for these white people out here?" her benefactor observed.) Mistaken identity is always at least a bit unpleasant, but it is not the same as racism.

WALTER E. WILLIAMS

Walter E. Williams is John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics at George Mason University.

CRIME IS THE PROBLEM

In my opinion, crime is the problem. It does not matter if you own a jewelry store, drive a cab, or if a stranger holds an elevator door for you. Crime does not have a race associated with it, yet there are those who would attach race to the perpetrators of crime.

If the people in the three hypothetical cases are so threatened or intimidated by blacks in a community where blacks make up more than half of the population, I would strongly suggest that they sell out, move to an all-white community, or don't drive a cab. If that solution is not feasible, the next best thing is to inquire at their local police department about involvement in community crime prevention programs. This is not a panacea. The police are not perfect or without prejudices either.

What would the jewelry store owner do if his business

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were located in the middle of America in an all-white community with a crime problem? Would he lock the doors and keep all white males out of his store? No. Nor would the women stop using elevators. They would not attach race to the crime or to the person who committed it. Yet, as crime has rapidly increased over the past few decades, more and more people seem to believe that only blacks are the perpetrators, and that it is an unalterable fact of modern life.

Such perceptions and attitudes prevent us from dealing with the real problem crime poses in America. The answer is not to lock your doors to blacks or stop riding the elevators. It is instead to begin to understand and work within our communities to help reduce the level of crime at work, home, and play.

RONALD HAMPTON

Ronald Hampton is a D.C. police officer.

ORDER AND DISARRAY

A jeweler who bars young black males from his store may or may not be a racist, but he is surely a grand simplifier, a naïf in flight from the complexity of urban America.

Anyone who endures the daily alarums of city life will recognize the need to impose some order on its scruffy disarray. Confronted every hour with fresh evidence of our own vulnerability, we all erect grids and charts, calculate risks and probabilities, promulgate axioms and formulas to reassure ourselves that we are in control.

One friend in New York refuses to ride the West Side subway but still takes its East Side counterpart. Another habitually crosses the street to avoid the teenagers who loiter outside a certain variety store. A third has switched his morning run from Riverside Park to Central Park. Are these rational responses to perceived danger or totemic rituals designed to ward off evil spirits? A bit of both, I imagine.

But how many of the perils that prowl our streets can really be addressed by such measures? What precautions, for example, could Dan Rather have taken a few weeks ago against the two well-dressed white men who accosted him near his home on upper Park Avenue and beat him repeatedly while shouting over and over, "Kenneth, what is the frequency?"

City life cannot be forced into neat little boxes and categories. Thus, though it is undoubtedly true that the banishment of young black males from Washington jewelry stores would reduce the number of robberies in those stores, so would the banishment of young white males; of young Hispanic males; of American Indians off the bus from New Mexico; of Appalachian drifters hitching in from West Virginia; of unemployed Greek dishwashers; of suburban kids out for a thrill; of senior citizens down on their luck.

So if I owned a jewelry store in Washington today, I'm sure I'd be as worried about crime as those whom Richard Cohen interviewed. I'd probably be more than a little nervous when some young black men entered my store, but I'd be just as concerned about some young white men. Finally, I hope I'd have the good sense to eschew a pat nostrum that would only give me a bogus sense of security, and insist instead on confronting my environment in all its disheveled ambiguity.

J. ANTHONY LUKAS

J. Anthony Lukas is the author of *Common Ground*, a study of three families—black, Irish, and Jewish—during the Boston busing crisis.

THE JEWELER'S EYE

I am a retired jeweler in Washington, D.C., and, yes, I had a buzzer system in my store and the same fears as Richard Cohen's jeweler. I experienced several "snatch and grabs" prior to the installation of my buzzer, and they were committed by, yes, "young black males age 18 to 25." Like everyone else who contemplates a buzzer, my two fears were: Am I a racist? Or will I be a dead merchant as a result of a robbery that gets out of control? Which fear do you choose to live with? If you're branded a racist, the worst that can happen is that you're out of business in one way or another but you continue to live and breathe. I chose the buzzer.

RHONDA SCHOEM

Rhonda Schoem wrote this contribution in the voice of her father. Ms. Schoem, former TNR controller, and her husband, a former D.C. policeman, recently took over her father's jewelry store.

THE WEIGHT OF SUSPICION

Who would object to the refusal of a storekeeper, particularly of a store so obviously a target for crime as a jewelry store, to admit a stranger who looked "suspicious"? What is the purpose of a locked door and a buzzer system unless to keep out strangers who might wish to do harm? And since they are by definition strangers, how does anyone expect to distinguish between the innocuous and the malevolent strangers except by finding the latter "suspicious"?

I would find anyone suspicious who appeared different in certain ways from most of those who come into my shop. Teenagers, unless they were conventionally dressed, would be suspicious. People whose carriage and movements gave the impression of nervous tension would be suspicious. People whose voice on the intercom sounded tense, artificial, unclear would be suspicious. My decision to admit would be based on an intuitive calculation of the number of categories of suspicion and the intensity of my feeling, balanced by the knowledge that I must take adverse chances or encounter the greater risk of losing my store. And, of course, I add two decisive categories of suspicion, assuming one or more of the categories previously mentioned were positively present: sex and race.

To pretend that a roughly dressed, nervous, slurring, tense young black male has a democratic right to enter a

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jewelry store is to distort a rational process with an irrelevant abstraction. Does it salve my conscience to say that I exclude him because he's suspicious, not because I ascribe an innate criminal potentiality to males with black skins? Perhaps. My parents used to whisper the phrase "colored people" lest our Negro maid be embarrassed.

I too like to feel virtuously unprejudiced, and I have convinced myself that only so long as young black males commit an inordinate number of robberies will I continue to find decisive some suspicion-raising attributes I would overlook in others.

ROGER STARR

Roger Starr is an editorial writer at the *New York Times.*

THE LAZY MAN'S SUBSTITUTE

Neither black nor white store owners are in business to display the virtues of admitting people of all colors, creeds, and fashions to their stores. They are in business to make money. I would want to take precautions to prevent robbery; I would look closely at people entering the store. The race of a potential customer would be one factor among many to be considered as I girded myself against thieves.

But in Washington and almost all other major cities, blacks do patronize jewelry stores. A jeweler in Beverly Hills who closed his or her door to heavily bejeweled Mr. T would be foolishly closing his cash register. Unless I am a racist, race and age cannot be the sole deciding factors in calculating whom I will or will not let into my store. And I certainly would not close my door to, say, all young black men—not even to those who are casually dressed and behaving nervously. I would act cautiously in dealing with them, as I would with an antic, strangely dressed white man.

As a cabdriver I would apply the same considerations. Discrimination can be used judiciously. I would certainly exclude one class of people: those who struck me as dangerous. Nervous-looking people with bulges under their jackets would not be picked up; nor would those who looked obviously drunk or stoned. It all comes down to a subjective judgment of what dangerous people look like. This does not necessarily entail a racial judgment. Cabdrivers who don't pick up young black men as a rule are making a poorly informed decision. Racism is a lazy man's substitute for using good judgment.

The elevator question is disingenuous. I suspect you are suggesting that I am a white woman getting into an apartment building elevator with a strange black man. Of course, black women have just as much to fear as white women. Nevertheless, black women living in black neighborhoods ride elevators with black men frequently, and do so without being raped. In this situation and all others, common sense is my constant guard. Common sense becomes racism when skin color becomes a formula for figuring out who is a danger to me.

JUAN WILLIAMS

Juan Williams is a reporter for the *Washington Post.*

CHEAP MORALIZING

What is the point of posing and answering these questions? Any direct and simple answer obscures more than it clarifies. If I say that I would refuse admission to young blacks, how do I deal with the justified anger of most of them, who press my buzzer hoping to buy a ring or a watch? If I say that I would routinely buzz back, how do I deal with the real fear that shopkeepers feel (which is hardly self-generated)? I would probably feel it too, if I were a shopkeeper; the stereotypes upon which it feeds are social, not personal creations.

Yes, I would be afraid, and since I would not want to keep a gun under the cash register, or hire an armed guard, I might well install a buzzer system. I think that I would be governed more by age than by race in deciding whether to buzz back or not—young punks, rather than young black punks, seems the appropriate category for refusal. But I can't say with any assurance that I would withstand the assumptions of the larger culture.

But these aren't the right questions for THE NEW REPUBLIC to be asking. The responses that individuals make when they are alone and frightened aren't made with sufficient freedom. Moral judgments in such cases pass easily into cheap moralizing. Or we respond in ideological terms, fastening individuals to political platforms. The point is to change the situation of the shopkeepers and of the people they fear. In a democratic society, the marketplace, like all other public places, ought to be open to all comers. We should not have to live with buzzer systems; they violate the principle of civility. It's not very important to know what I would or wouldn't do given the violation. We need to think instead about what ought to be done to vindicate the principle.

MICHAEL WALZER

Michael Walzer teaches moral philosophy at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

BLACK MAN'S BURDEN

While I am putting myself in the shoes of the jewelry store owner, I will also put myself in the skin of a black person. This makes the dilemma even more interesting.

In downtown Washington, where my jewelry store is located, I know that it is possible, but not likely, that a white man is going to rob me. To the extent that I worry about robbers, I mostly worry about blacks. Thus one effective method of keeping robbers out of my store will be to scrutinize blacks more carefully.

I don't much like to do this because I know how easily such occasional and sensible "discrimination" can turn into widespread and simple bigotry. For example, I read in the *Washington Post* recently that when I go out to look for a house or an apartment in the Washington area, I have a 50 percent chance of being steered away from white neighborhoods or not being shown the nicest apartment or not being told about all the amenities. Now, most of these real

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estate agents in Washington are white and most of them very courteous. You just never know when one of them may rip you off.

As a businessman, I like to be consistent in my dealings with the public. If I don't let a black guy in the door because he's black and he's wearing a baseball cap, maybe I should refuse to deal with a white real estate agent the next time I am apartment hunting. Or maybe I should refuse to be shown around by white real estate agents with Southern accents who voted for Ronald Reagan. But what would white people think if they knew that successful black men like myself were refusing to do business with them just because of their skin color?

The last thing black people need today is a lot of white people getting pissed off at them. So when facing a situation in which I might get ripped off, I think it's prudent to take a chance. The humiliation of getting ripped off by some speedy black kid who snatches one of my gold necklaces is comparable to the humiliation of getting discriminated against by some smiling white real estate agent. But, of course, the odds that black kid outside is going to rob me are nowhere near 50 percent. Someday I hope I won't have to wonder about white real estate agents. So I figure: unless he's really a dangerous-looking kid, let him in. A lot of white people won't understand that it's them, more than the kid, I'm giving a break. But maybe someday.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

THE CABBIE'S EYE

In Washington one of the most frequently cited examples of racial discrimination is the difficulty that young black men have in hailing a cab. Although most District citizens and cabbies are black, many drivers refuse to pick up black youths at night for fear of being robbed. I spent an evening at the cab stand at Washington's Union Station, and found drivers—all but one black—evenly split between those who used race as a major factor in deciding whether to take a fare and those who said they rely exclusively on other factors.

Ten of the 20 drivers questioned admitted to using race as a criterion for not picking someone up, in combination with other factors such as age, sex, and dress. All defended it as a rational decision based on the greater likelihood of being robbed by blacks. "It's not that I have anything against them, but young black guys account for about 80 percent of the crime in this city; I am just looking out for myself," said one driver, who said that he never picks up black youths at night. "It's because unemployment and frustration are highest in this group. I was frustrated myself when I was that age: no one would give me a job, no one would send me to college. But now I have a family to protect and I can't take the risk."

One driver, who claimed to be the only white female cabbie in the District, said that as a rule she avoided any black, male or female, under the age of 25. A male colleague said he would accept any female fare but passed up male teenagers of any race. Most of those questioned said they based their risk calculations on what they read in the newspapers or on stories related by other cabbies, rather than on personal experience.

Sinclair C. Parks, who regularly drives in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods in Washington, said that age is the most important factor in picking out troublemakers. "Rough-looking street teenagers—I never pick 'em up. White or black doesn't make a difference; it's the initial impression you get," he said. To consider a person's race "is not an accurate way to predict what they'll do. You have to make the call in each particular case—just like the referee in a basketball game."

Even if they did not use racial criteria, most cabbies seemed sympathetic toward those who did. "When you let someone into the cab, you're putting your life in their hands. I don't discriminate because it's wrong on principle, but if people think that their safety is in danger I'm not going to call 'em racist," said one driver. Another initially defended a race-blind policy, but later confided, "No black youth gets into my cab."

But Eunice Dunne, who relies on neither race nor age to decide whether to accept a fare, said that to do so would "certainly be racist, racist and stupid. Most young black males are responsible citizens. There are a few that might look to rob you, but they are so far and few between that it's senseless to reject the entire group." Dunne said that in a year of driving part-time, the only confrontation she had had was with a white male who refused to pay his fare.

CROCKER COULSON

THE EDITORS COMMENT

Among our contributors, Ronald Hampton, the police officer, takes the hardest line against buzzer bias. Even he, though, fails to note that it's illegal. A jewelry store, as a public accommodation, is forbidden to discriminate on the basis of race under the Civil Rights Act. If race is *ever* a factor in deciding whom you admit to your store, you are breaking the law. Proof and prosecution would be virtually impossible, of course. But it's interesting that the law imposes a duty that all of our contributors except Hampton, Anthony Lukas, and some of the cabdrivers (who may have been disingenuous) concede they would sometimes feel justified in disregarding. (The elevator hypothetical is different in this respect.)

So is the law wrong to impose this duty? Walter Williams argues that generalizing from race can be rational behavior in a world of imperfect information, and therefore is not racism. But this argument "proves too much," as lawyers like to say. Only petty apartheid of the "whites only" drinking fountain variety is completely irrational in this narrow sense. Most of the racial discrimination American society is struggling to overcome—in schools, housing, employment—could be justified as the efficient use of statistically sound generalizations. Even the bi-

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ased realtors of Jefferson Morley's example might just be making an economically rational accommodation to the irrational prejudice of their white customers. Walter Williams may not find this objectionable, but most TNR readers will.

Anthony Lukas essentially shares Professor Williams's analysis, but reaches the opposite conclusion: the store owner who considers race is an inefficient Bayesian, irrationally generalizing from a factor that is of no predictive value. Most of us would love to believe this, but can't.

Michael Walzer insists that we must "change the situation of the shopkeepers and of the people they fear." No one would argue with that. But moral questions are not pointless simply because they will disappear when we eliminate racial prejudice and urban crime. It's true that the questions we pose are likely to arise when people are "alone and frightened." In those circumstances, a racial response may be understandable without being morally correct. That is precisely why we posed the questions to people at a time when they are comfortable and safe, free to accept or reject "the assumptions of the larger culture." And the questions remain.

Our other symposiasts stake out various areas of the middle ground, admitting that they are uncomfortable about taking race into account, but admitting also that they might use race as a major factor (Roger Starr, Rhonda Schoem) or a minor one (Juan Williams, Morley) in deciding whom to admit to their store. Maybe there's no way to do better than this. We would add just three thoughts.

FIRST, RETURNING to Walter Williams's framework of analysis, there is surely in all of us—especially white people—a tendency to overgeneralize from race. The intelligent Bayesian will compensate for this. A jewelry store owner who thinks he's got the factors toted up correctly might well want to discount the race factor by a large fraction before deciding not to hit the buzzer—just to make sure he's actually making the rational decision.

Second, citizenship imposes duties, and citizenship in a multiracial society requires us to act sometimes in ways that are not in our rational self-interest, narrowly defined. That duty may not require the jewelry store owner to ignore the race of young males wishing to enter his store, but it does call for another discount on the race factor in making the calculation.

Third, the burden of the race problem is one we share as a society. The solutions that will be the least successful—and will stir the most resentments—are the ones that attempt to impose a disproportionate part of that burden on random individuals. Expecting a jewelry store owner to risk his life in the service of color-blind justice is expecting too much. Acknowledging this reality, however, also requires acknowledging that society as a whole, principally through the government, must do all the more.

Benign racism in America.

CLOSED DOORS

BY JUAN WILLIAMS

A FRIEND OF mine, a drummer, recently went to Norway with his band. He called the other day to say he isn't coming back. Charles Mana can't believe the life he lives there as a 30-year-old black man. When he walks down the street at night he doesn't have to cut a wide path around white people. He's not used to being asked by an elderly white woman on the train to help her carry her bag to a dark parking lot. His efforts to gain the attention of nightclubs do not run into the racial barriers of heavy metal (white) versus urban progressive (black) rock. He can play his sound and people listen to it for what it is. The in-crowd that runs the music industry is not averse to a black musician who isn't already a celebrity. In the United States he had to deal with the elite and nervous group of black executives at white record companies who were chary of taking a risk on an unproven talent. And in Norway, he said, doormen, store owners, and salesmen don't treat him like a potential thief, "like a nigger back home."

I'm pleased for Charlie. But his call left me raw, stripping away any pretense left in my day-to-day existence that it is possible to be more than a "black" in America. Every nation, including Norway, has its own benighted minority. But in the United States it is the current fashion to pretend that we've put all that behind us. I'm not part of that fashionable crowd. Although I've become callused to much of the indignity that goes with having dark skin in white America, racism is a constant reality for me. And when the calluses peel away, I feel anew how much of my identity is drained from me in trying not to scare whites while walking down the street; in standing on a street corner fruitlessly waving my hand for a cab; in dealing with bosses who see me as a symbol of racial progress for the company or as another disgruntled black employee; in going shopping in a store where my skin color makes me an automatic robbery suspect.

This last point was raised in a recent controversial column by *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen. He supported Washington store owners who often won't let young black men through the door on the grounds that they are potential thieves. If they are admitted to the store, salespeople surround them until they leave. Cohen rationally argued that the store owners' actions are justified since the statistics show that young black men commit most of the District's robberies and muggings. I

Juan Williams, national correspondent for the *Washington Post*, is the author of *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965*, to be published in December by Viking/Penguin.

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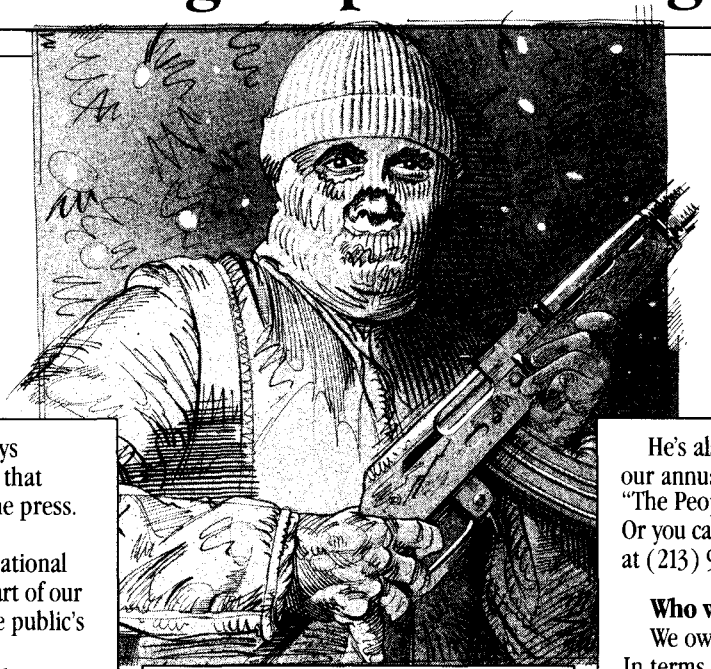
"The People & The Press," Part 2

Is he holding the press hostage, too?



Terrorists almost always seek publicity, and to that end they try to use the press. Do they succeed?

We asked Gallup to ask a national sample of Americans. It was part of our ongoing investigation into the public's attitudes toward the press.

All told, Gallup asked people 33 questions about their views of press coverage of terrorism. Here's how they responded.

Ambivalence about terrorist coverage generally:

% National Sample Who Think:

Press coverage of terrorists serves public interest: 65%
23% — harms it

Press coverage of terrorists is very/mostly satisfactory: 61%
37% — very/mostly unsatisfactory

Press gives terrorists too much coverage: 51%
7% — too little
40% — right amount

Very likely terrorists acts would occur regardless: 28%
39% — fairly likely
24% — not too likely

TV coverage good or excellent: 75%
— print coverage 74%

Press coverage increases sympathy for terrorist cause: 29%
14% — reduces it
48% — has no effect

Press coverage increases chances of future terrorist acts: 60%
7% — reduces chances
21% — has no effect

Press coverage increases hostages' time in captivity: 44%
13% — reduces it
27% — has no effect

Press coverage makes hostages safer: 33%
25% — less safe
28% — has no effect

Good marks for coverage of terrorist incidents:

Incident	*% Rating Coverage Excellent Or Good*
TWA Flight 847 Hijacking	80
Achille Lauro Hijacking	80
Pan Am Flight 73 Hijacking	72

Concern that terrorists manipulate the press.

When asked why the press sometimes doesn't cover terrorist incidents well, 52% said that terrorists' ability to manipulate the press was a major factor.

What we think these findings mean:

(1) You and your fellow citizens find terrorism as difficult a subject to deal with as we in the press do;
(2) You want us to continue to provide full coverage of terrorist incidents, but you'd like it to be more restrained, "quieter";
(3) You want us to be especially careful not to let terrorists use us to help them gain their objectives.

What do you think?

Your views will help us serve our readers and viewers better. Send them to our chairman, Robert Erburu, Times Mirror, Times Mirror Square, Suite 100, Los Angeles, CA 90053.

He's also the person to write for our annual report or a summary of "The People & The Press, Part 2." Or you can call our public affairs people at (213) 972-3946.

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Times Mirror

We're interested in what you think.

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found the column an outrageous offering of well-dressed bigotry, and I was dismayed to hear white friends defend it as an opinion rooted in truth.

In fact, it is a lie. A convenient, racist lie. Nationally 21 percent of all robberies and muggings are committed by black males between the ages of 18 and 29. White males between the same ages commit exactly the same percentage of the muggings and robberies. (In Washington, where 70 percent of the population is black, the police department reports that 41 percent of all robberies and attempted robberies are committed by black males age 18 to 24.) My only association with any black muggers and robbers is my skin color. Most young black men in this city can make the same prosaic claim. That truth escapes those who are quick to draw dubious links between crime and race, even those liberal, presumably fair-minded whites such as Cohen. They work with blacks; they claim they are not bigoted at all. Their adherence to the old stereotypes is thus all the more baffling and insidious.

Whites have far less to fear from a potential black mugger than a black person does. For example, according to the Department of Justice's "National Crime Victim Survey," in robberies committed by blacks, 14 percent of the victims are white and 83 percent are black. Of course, anyone seeing another person approaching on a deserted street has reason to be paranoid. In one way or another, crime periodically intrudes upon the lives of most Americans. And young black men do commit a disproportionate share of muggings in some cities. But if a black person has been beaten up or robbed by another black person, he or she doesn't leap to the conclusion that young men with black skin should be automatically suspect as muggers and/or robbers. Those victims know other black people as brothers, friends, and so on, and retain their ability to treat them as individuals.

Some whites seem not to want to bother to make this distinction between individual blacks. They may figure it costs them less to close their doors to some blacks or to make black shoppers feel uncomfortable than to be robbed by a black thief. The price paid by blacks—the loss of their individual identity and achieved self-worth—is not an issue for them. It is for me.

IN TRUTH, Cohen's column is an exposé of the first order. The revealed instinct to bigotry and the attempt to justify it in print as protecting one's self (or store) against crime offer a rare public glimpse of the subterranean pool of prejudices now judged acceptable among some whites for news columns, over the dinner table, among sophisticated friends and colleagues, and even to a black friend from whom they seek reassurance that they have good reason for their racism. The operative principle guiding most of this is not so much simple racial hate as it is indifference. I find that whites generally prefer not to think about blacks or racial issues. It is too burdensome to go through the deep waters of race relations. There are too many instances of clear-cut injustice, too much guilt. (My favorite evasion: "I've never discriminated against anyone. Why do I have to do anything for blacks?") Let's talk about arms control and the Evil Empire.

Much of the increasing ease with which some whites avoid thinking about race (not to mention some blacks who either feel weary of discussing the subject or believe they can score points with whites by not mentioning it) is due to a sense of comfort from the progress that has been made in race relations since the not-so-long-ago evil days of strict segregation. The sight of well-dressed blacks in the corridors of big corporations and lunching downtown with their American Express cards is reassurance enough that race relations in the United States aren't deteriorating after all.

BUT WHETHER YOU are black or white, there is, finally, no pretending, as President Reagan would have it, that race doesn't matter in the United States because we are a "color-blind" society. Race remains the central domestic issue in the nation. Even if some blacks are doing better (there are more black doctors and lawyers than ever, although they still amount to less than one percent of the nation's doctors and lawyers), consider that 70 percent of blacks still earn under $20,000 a year. Black college graduates are often earning about the same as their white counterparts, but blacks still earn, on average, about 56 cents for every dollar earned by whites—a drop of about five points in the last decade. Unemployment is currently three times higher among black Americans than among white Americans.

Increasingly, those who bother to respond at all to these unpleasant truths contend that blacks need to practice more "self-help" to end their dependence on the government, to lower illegitimate birth rates, to encourage excellence in school. In policymaking and intellectual circles these days, "self-help" is the equivalent of a "Get Out of Jail Free" card in Monopoly. These people insist that blacks can solve their own problems, competing and succeeding in the American mainstream as have Asians, West Indians, Hispanics, or any other minority that has made a place for itself in the land of opportunity.

Black intellectuals such as Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury have been among those who contend that blacks need to direct more energy into straightening their own house. Well, the argument is not without truth. There is much the black community can do to start and support its own businesses, offer clear moral guidance to children on the problems of drugs and teenage pregnancy. People need to know that some patterns of behavior hurt them and their community. But this is not a new argument. Throughout the history of this nation, blacks have practiced self-help in churches, black schools, black fraternities, and tightly knit families; and more recently through groups like the NAACP and Urban League. A far more urgent reality is this country's history of legal, government-enforced discrimination against black people.

One recent study showed that for young men graduating from high school, the best route to a job was through relatives. The absence or small number of older black workers—due to outright discrimination in the '40s, '50s, and '60s—means that young black men don't get into the job pipeline at the same rate as white youngsters. Another

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study found that a black person renting an apartment or house hunting in the Washington, D.C., area has about a 50 percent chance of being turned away solely on the basis of race. A black, middle-class Boston developer told the *Boston Globe* last year that he was shut out by white architects and builders when he tried to get contracts in white neighborhoods. He found the banks reluctant to deal with a new developer who was black, and the insurance companies adamant in their refusal to adjust bonding requirements for a developer who was not one of the boys among the established white developers in town.

IN WASHINGTON that benign racism continues to prevail. It is not only jewelry stores that exclude black people. Blacks are not even allowed in the door for the serious business of politics unless there is a black faction to be placated with a token face. The Democratic National Committee recently held a high-powered dinner for its top fund-raisers and best known politicians and did not invite a single black politician—not Bill Gray, chairman of the House Budget Committee, and not Jesse Jackson, the presidential candidate in 1984. When Mickey Leland, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, protested about the all-white meeting, he was told that Jackson had not raised money for the party and Gray was not a presidential candidate. This is the black community's reward for voting overwhelmingly for Democratic candidates. And yet blacks who criticize the Democratic Party for this sort of insult are denounced as demagogues.

It has gone almost without notice that President Reagan has not met with black civil rights leaders or spoken to major black groups in over five years. He also refuses to meet with elected black politicians. The Defense Department, the State Department, and the security agencies don't have blacks (with their perspectives and ideas) in executive positions and are not interested in Americans of color unless they need the face to satisfy an affirmative action goal.

The effect of the Reagan approach has been to narrow the entire civil rights policy debate to a zero-sum game in which blacks are trying to take away jobs and opportunity from whites. In that atmosphere there is little room for a middle ground. Blacks and whites are polarized. Even conservative, middle-class blacks who favor more discipline and hard work in the black community, and who are raising questions about affirmative action goals and quotas, are uneasy about the administration's civil rights ideals. It is all too apparent that while Reagan's men speak in self-righteous tones about discrimination against hardworking whites and the need for blacks to do more to help themselves, these men have neglected violations of black voting rights to the point where Reagan resisted signing an extension of the Voting Rights Act; twisted the Civil Rights Commission into an advocacy group for the administration's position that helping blacks is reverse discrimination; and tried to restore tax breaks to segregationist schools.

But perhaps the most damaging of all the race-conscious trends in America is a presumption I find common among whites. The presumption is that if a black person were skilled he would perform just like a white person—play office politics as a white would, get the same encouragement and the same measure of respect from his peers as a white would, be invited to the right dinner parties—in other words, earn the right to be treated white. This is what whites are saying when they confide to friends, some black, that they can't find black professionals able to handle the job or able to meet the standards of the other workers. We'd love to have a black, they say, but we can't sacrifice standards.

A bright black person still needs added support in a white work environment simply because to be black in most white corporate settings is to be an outsider, and outsiders don't do well in any corporation. They are not in on the gossip, they don't have the mentors or the contacts. Blacks are not party to the support system of corporate networks and old school ties that provide the boosts necessary to even the brightest white people. I've been in a job where I've worked hard, displayed loyalty to the company, and yet management never displays the trust in me that they place in my white colleagues. Contrary to popular belief, even today this nation is far from a meritocracy. Morris Abram, a white man on Reagan's reconstituted Civil Rights Commission and a firm believer in America as a color-blind meritocracy, obtained a job at the commission for a friend of his son. Self-help indeed.

WHY SHOULD whites be asked to disregard race when discussing crime, but urged to take it into account when dealing with blacks in the workplace? When is discrimination racist, and when is it both legitimate and necessary? It is no secret that distinctions between black and white behavior have been used throughout this country's history to exclude blacks from the fundamental rights and privileges of American citizenship. Surely the right to enter a jewelry store without being harassed because of one's age, sex, or skin color is one of them. The purpose of the civil rights movement was not to abolish the differences among races, but to ensure that blacks (and women and other minorities) are granted the rights they have been systematically denied. Affirmative action in the workplace has played a critical role in that process. When can whites legitimately say they've redressed the sins of a racist past? I don't know. I do know that there must be better proof than there is today that the practice of discrimination through exclusion has been relinquished.

To be born black in this country today still means that you will likely go to a second-rate big-city public school. Even if you get through high school and into college, you will find a declining number of black students in colleges, and those who are left are often bitterly alienated by the absence of any concession to the difficulty of being black in an overwhelmingly white environment. Ed Meese and Ronald Reagan seem to be joined by increasing numbers of Americans who object to special treatment. Their anthem is equality for all. For Charlie Mana, that anthem wasn't enough. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Lone Stars

True Stories is a film that might have been made by Monty Python if the British group had been transported to small-town Texas and thoroughly naturalized—and had lost much of its edge in the process. David Byrne, who directed, wrote the script with the playwright Beth Henley and the theater director Stephen Tobolowksy. The result has the shape, designed yet seemingly casual, of Monty Python scripts but very little of their incisive wit. Since Byrne is also prominent in the rock group Talking Heads, some of the group's music is in the film, well integrated.

True Stories
(Warner Brothers)
Clockwise
(Universal)
Peggy Sue Got Married
(Tri-Star)

True Stories begins promisingly. A white-clad girl of nine or ten, singing idly to herself, wanders in the middle of a highway that stretches from us to the horizon through flat featureless country. The film ends the same way. In both shots, there's a dab of humanity in the midst of immeasurable nullity. But what we get between the opening and close is a series of banalities about banality, enlivened only rarely by a keen idea or agreeable music. Byrne is intent to show us—as if for the first time—the petty-bourgeois customs, the media hype, the bloated vulgarities of American small-town life. The only difference here is that Byrne also shows some touches of affection for it all. The occasion is the 150th anniversary of the mythical Texas town of Virgil, and as soon as we know that, we know most of what we're going to see, including the gala outdoor performance by local talent and the big hometown parade.

Byrne's reputation goes beyond the usual rock audience. He has collaborated with Robert Wilson on some of the latter's theater work (which I'm hoping to see this winter). But his film seems to rely on our knowledge of his reputation from rock albums and *Stop Making Sense* and other ventures, not on his achievement here. The most taking element is his complete cool. He appears in Texan clothes, neat and unwrinkled, a slim unhistrionic man who serves as commentator and participates in some of the music and sketches. Most of his role consists of driving along in a red convertible, accompanied by the camera, acting as our guide to the town. As he tools along, he talks about the beauty of some of the (drab) scenery, about the (plump) houses with four-car garages, about the advantages of the (depressing) prefab commercial buildings. In his very last remark before he disappears, he tells us that his car is not rented, it's privately owned—an irrelevance that caps perfectly the casual feeling of the film.

But the catalog of cartoons along the way is trite and not often funny. Do we really need to see more of the earnest pathos of small-town holiday parades—the drum majorettes, the lawn-mower brigade? The parade shots are apparently taken from a real event. The fictions include a lonely man who makes a TV commercial advertising for a wife, a woman in a cutesy house who answers the ad, and a meeting between the two more clumsy than the man himself; a couple who speak to each other only through their children; a gabby woman who fantasticates her sex life. Only one strand is amusing: a lazy rich woman, played by Swoosie Kurtz, who never gets out of bed, is fed by a Chaplin machine, and does nothing except change her wigs and the channels on her TV.

Finally, what we're left admiring most is Byrne's ability to spend so much of his producer's money nonchalantly.

John Cleese, famous through Monty Python, stars in a British farce called *Clockwise*, written by the versatile Michael Frayn, best known in this country for his play *Noises Off*. The two names raise expectations; the film wallops them.

Cleese plays the headmaster of a state school, a moderate martinet who runs the school by the clock. He has been elected president of the headmasters' association, and the plot concerns his efforts to get to the association meeting on time. The basic gag is out of W. S. Gilbert: Cleese has the habit of saying "Right!" meaning "Very well." At the railway station where he is to entrain for the meeting, his "Right!" gets him on the wrong train. All the complications swell from this initial error and interfere with his punctuality.

Frayn built his script inventively and with neat dialogue, somewhat in the vein of the farces that Ian Carmichael did in the 1950s—*Private's Progress*, *I'm All Right, Jack*, and others. Cleese is the best English farceur since Carmichael. But the picture lags and sags because the director, Christopher Morahan, has no gift for farce. (Nor much gift for serious drama: I walked out of his London production of *Wild Honey*, adapted from Chekhov by Frayn.) Actions are continued a fatal mite too long; reactions are heavy or superfluous. Nothing skims or hums.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Ménage. Gerard Depardieu, Michel Blanc, and Miou-Miou in a French frolic about a trio who flout sexual and social convention. Deflates toward the end when it gets plotty, floats while it's insouciant. (Reviewed 11/3/86)

Otello. Verdi's masterwork abridged to two hours, but Placido Domingo's Otello and Justino Diaz's Iago are marvelous nonetheless and make Franco Zeffirelli's film transposition valuable. (10/6/86)

Partisans of Vilna. Interviews with the survivors of the first Jewish resistance against the Germans. Presented with simplicity, how could it help being powerful? (10/20/86)

Sid and Nancy. Lives and deaths of the punk rocker Sid Vicious and his girlfriend. Good acting, writing, direction change it from rock fans' idolatry to a grim, gripping chronicle. (10/27/86)

SK

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We just get a series of scenes that we know ought to be funny—probably *were* funny on paper—but that aren't making us laugh. This film needed Terry Jones, who directed *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*.

Francis Coppola has been lost since *The Godfather*. I was not the No. 1 fan of the *Godfather* duo, but I certainly thought that Coppola was at home with those pictures, doing work that lay completely in his grasp. Since then he has not been grasping, he has been grabbing, from the overblown rhetoric of *Apocalypse Now* to the risibly intense vernacular of *Rumblefish*. Now he has grabbed again, differently, and fumbled again.

Of course Coppola knew when he agreed to direct *Peggy Sue Got Married* that this script, by Jerry Leichtling and Arlene Sarner, was close kin to *Back to the Future*. Presumably, then, he thought he could make a film that would equal, perhaps surpass, the earlier one. The result doesn't make clear why he thought so. The chief difference between *Peggy Sue* and *Future* is that the time traveler is not an adolescent who goes back in time as an adolescent; she's a married woman with two children who goes back to her high school self 16 years before. Another difference: *Peggy Sue* doesn't have amusing science-fiction transportation thither and back; the heroine just faints and dreams the bulk of the picture. Feeble.

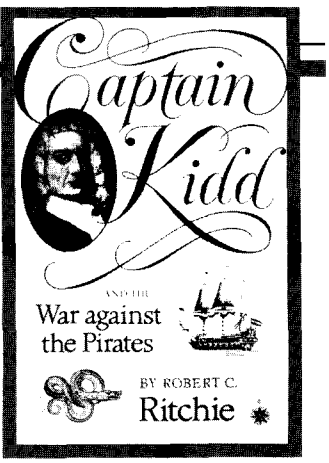
The point of the backward trip is not much stronger: Peggy Sue re-establishes that she loves the youth she married, even though in the present they are separated because of his philandering. She herself has a brief fling in the past with a stereotypical rebellious-poet youth, but we know nothing will come of it because we know the future. The film doesn't even tickle the suspense in this kind of story: possible alteration of the past so that the present, which we know has already happened, may not happen.

In an egregiously bad piece of casting, Kathleen Turner, who was good as the icy killer in *Prizzi's Honor*, plays the small-town wife who spends most of the picture as a high school girl. Turner doesn't have the range; she seems merely uncomfortable throughout, overacts, and misses even such heart-tug *Our Town* moments as the visit with her grandparents who, she knows, are dead in the present. Turner's boyfriend-husband is played by Nicolas Cage. He is Coppola's nephew. Nothing else explains why this

Oh, You Kidd!

Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates

Robert C. Ritchie



He was a buccaneer living a life of high adventure and low deeds, with much of the romance the image conjures. But he started as less outlaw than legend would have it, for early piracy was encouraged by a government that couldn't afford a peacetime navy. Thus William Kidd's fortune was inextricably bound to the power of the Whig leaders. When their power waned, the sun set on Kidd's freedom and he found himself standing on the gallows.

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thin-voiced inadequacy was given the role. Errant charm is needed, and all we get is a goof.

Coppola directs with only one small touch of imagination. The film opens with a camera pullback "through" a mirror in Peggy Sue's bedroom, thus hinting at the time-travel to come, and the last shot is another passage through the mirror. As for the rest, Coppola is still a talent looking for the right means to flower again.

MARK STEVENS ON ART

Brushes with Politics

In 1933 Diego Rivera painted a mural for Rockefeller Center that included a portrait of Lenin. Nelson Rockefeller asked him to remove it; Rivera naturally refused. The mural was then destroyed. Could there be a more heartfelt compliment? Power took art seriously; art successfully insulted power. The insult, moreover, was delivered with panache. Imagine—Lenin in the temple of capitalism! The Rivera retrospective now under way in Mexico City (it has been in Detroit and Philadelphia and will travel to Madrid and Berlin) puts today's political art into sharp perspective. There may be more artists than ever who, as the formalist orthodoxy wanes, make political art. But they cannot deliver the comparable insult.

Instead of anger, contemporary political art is more likely to provoke a yawn, a grant, or a "Have a nice day." (Totalitarian countries, of course, still pay art that compliment of anger.) More importantly, the art itself, while often good, lacks the substantial force of earlier work. Rivera was, if not a great artist, an indisputably large one: a big man with a big heart who painted big subjects with a big technique on big walls. He could address power powerfully. Today's political artists—as they confront nuclear war, Reagan, or sexual repression—do not bring the same measure of beauty and bite to their work.

It is worth asking why. In any period, most political art is vulgar propaganda rendered by artists of little visual intelligence. But the modern tradition contains some great exceptions, moments when art and politics together struck a telling spark. The artists who sought to unmask the reality of power, as the German expressionists did, or to express the hope of power, as the Russian avant-garde did, have set an important standard. If art can no longer dream of power with the same intensity, then the modern imagination has lost a vivid color.

Talent is not the main problem. Artists today simply have fewer resources than their predecessors. Consider first what is missing. Sixty years ago, artists lived in a period of strong utopian feeling. As dangerous as such feeling proved to be, it nonetheless gave a secular art the opportunity to express the yearning for transcendence. In particular, utopian Marxism provided an inspiriting view of power and a way to map the progress of civilization. The revolutions of the time—the Mexican no less than the Russian—raised hopes that mankind could remake itself. Inspired to create a new picture of a new people, Rivera muscled together elements as diverse as the Mexicans themselves: pre-Columbian forms, European cubism, the visual logic of machines, storytelling frescoes, the turmoil of the crowd. His murals of the earthly struggle of the Mexican people, made for a still largely preliterate culture, recall nothing so much as a medieval portrayal of a saint's inspired progress toward heaven.

Political artists could also depend upon revolutionary formal ideas. The affront of new forms suits apocalyptic art: the shock transports. It was the Russian avant-garde that most effectively turned cubism toward utopian ends. For Malevich, cubism was a new way to understand the world; just as cubism broke down form into its essentials, then reassembled the pieces into a new order, so men themselves could be recast according to the fresh imperatives of the future. The flying forms of the Russians—they let the sky into cubism—recalled the modern to the eternal.

Not least, political artists could take their avant-garde status for granted. Rivera painted when the modernist critique of bourgeois culture was still wounding, when revolutionary art and politics were still spinning away from mainstream culture. Like the dadaists, who made an art of subversion, he believed himself to be above and apart from bourgeois society—an outsider, with an outsider's moral perspective. It was therefore natural to dream of a transcendent politics. It was honest work to insult a Rockefeller. (Even in the good old bad days, however, it demanded a certain naïveté for Rivera to consider himself a radical outsider. A Rockefeller might destroy his mural, but the real wonder is that a Mexican Marxist was hired in the first place.)

There are still Marxists, of course. But they must be very foolish to share the utopian fervor of their predecessors. (Equally foolish are those who retain the Bauhaus faith in science.) There are also significant formal developments in painting and performance art. But artists cannot find formal tools as revolutionary as those once offered by cubism and dada. And though there remain artists who continue to stand apart from society and incur real costs in dreaming of better worlds, they cannot, unless smitten by nostalgia, maintain the moral perspective of an earlier time. Too many mean streets have fed into Madison Avenue (what was once moral authority often becomes moral prestige), and too many artists have behaved badly.

Lacking so much, today's utopian artists have retired into the personal and the idiosyncratic. The witchy German artist Joseph Beuys, who died this year, created the essential work of this kind. He gave his own life the quality of a resurrection myth. A fighter pilot shot down over Russia during World War II, he claimed to have been saved by a wandering band of Tartars who wrapped him in fat and felt to protect him from the cold. In his performances, drawings, and statements, Beuys, a charismatic figure, transformed this story into a metaphor for the resurrection of society at large. His art combined a sickly fetishism (he liked, among other things, fat and coyote fur) evocative of a society weakened by war with an inspiriting confidence that the world itself would someday become a work of art. As singular as Beuys was, however, his work lacks—and in this way it is typical of today's political art—that heartiness, that conviction of being part of something much larger than art, that was characteristic of Rivera or of the Russian avant-garde.

If not heaven, then hell? Surely to-

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...great revolutions..." *"We know lots of revolutions, great revolutions, and magnificent people, who after taking over power, produced systems that were much worse than the ones they destroyed. We don't want to make this mistake. We will not."*

--Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa in a "Morning Edition" interview in Gdansk, Poland, with National Public Radio's European correspondent Neal Conan.

"I never share blame, I never share credit, and I never share desserts. It's just not my style."

--Beverly Sills, New York City Opera general director, in an interview on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

"Drunk they (the Russians) defeated Napoleon. Drunk they beat Hitler. Drunk they could win against NATO."

--Edward Luttwak, defense analyst and author of "The Pentagon and the Art of War," talking with National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" host Bob Edwards about Soviet military strength.

"We are so different, and yet, we are all one." *"I've never seen so many women, of so many different ages, colors, sizes and shapes, and I think it's amazing. We are so different, and yet, we are all one."*

--A delegate to the United Nations' World Conference on Women, talking with National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" co-host Susan Stamberg in Nairobi, Kenya.

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day's political artists, caught between holocausts past and future, can effectively portray the abuse of power. In fact, they rarely do. Once again, they cannot call upon certain essential resources. The old tactics of shock and distortion of line, color, and perspective can no longer surprise us into pain. The critical difficulty, however, is one of scale. To render adequately a subject as big as the end of the world, an artist must himself marshal great power. If he does not, he becomes a small artist strutting in the light of a vast subject. Artists in the past have often relied upon religion to help provide adequate spiritual scale. Lacking this, they have invoked what might be called the shadow, or afterimage, of religious and philosophical power. In Goya's *The Third of May, 1808*, for example, the victim's outstretched arms—he is about to die a tawdry modern death at the hands of an execution squad—recall Christ's, but without Christ's majesty on the cross. In like fashion, Picasso's *Guernica* evokes the grandeur of the past. The rich earth tones of classical Mediterranean culture have been leached into modern black and white, however, and the settled forms of classical art have been shattered by bombs.

CONTEMPORARY artists will find that these ways of lending scale to their pictures of holocaust have worn thin. The strategy of afterimage often amounts to using the afterimage of an afterimage. And the irony in a painting that turns a mushroom cloud into the heavenly host is hardly magisterial. Some artists, impressed by the moral authority of art, do little more than wag their brush at Armageddon. Behind a scene of carnage one can almost see, floating like a billboard, the artist's statement: "Because I, an artist, find nuclear war reprehensible, you, the viewer, will applaud, I am sure, my denunciation of this terrible, terrible thing."

What then is a serious artist to do, if driven to speak out against the hellish abuse of power? To argue that silence is the only adequate response to an Auschwitz has become a pious cliché, a way to reduce a monstrosity to a shrine. Three contemporary strategies for portraying nuclear holocaust are worth discussing. The most common presents nuclear war as a regression to a maniacal and childish machismo. (*The Great Dictator* set the standard.) For example, the ceramicist Robert Arneson, known for his funky caricatures, turns the eye of a black humorist on nuclear warfare: his horrific *General Nuke* has an MX for a nose. The second approach is more intellectual. Robert Morris has constructed complex works that are part painting, part sculpture. His painting of a nuclear firestorm, glowing with sensuous oranges and reds, has a kitschy appeal—a clever way to suggest the strangely sensual allure that the big bang has for many people. The paintings are framed by reliefs of skulls and dismembered limbs, and sometimes allude to Leonardo's apocalyptic *Deluge Drawings*. The third approach is sly. Claes Oldenburg has simply exhibited a gigantic burned-out match. It leans up from the floor (as fire twists a wooden match upwards) in a phallic reach.

NONE OF these strategies is altogether fitting, though each identifies something important in the way we think about doom. In Arneson, to be sure, the problem of scale becomes part of the point: the dizzy contrast between the magnitude of the disaster and the childishness of those responsible arouses disgust. Yet the thought that the world will end with a grisly joke, not with a bang or a whimper, leaves out too much. It is just a punch line. Morris's remarkable work has the opposite problem. The strain of making his art substantial enough shows. He has overstuffed the work with import; it is too smart, too academic, too showy for the subject. (One of the impressive things about Leonardo's *Deluge Drawings* is that they are drawings—the greatest of all doodles.)

Oldenburg has used wit to deflect, if not quite resolve, the problem of scale. Looking at Oldenburg's match, which seems both big and little, is like peering at the end of the world from a mouse hole. The work contains nothing earnest or preachy; an absurdist world, stripped of the highfalutin, should not put on airs at the end. In its reliance on the unsaid, on the deflationary twist of wit, Oldenburg's match is a pleasingly concise and tactful work of art, and it moves us for that reason. Using the corner of the eye to see the nuclear holocaust seems apt—the missiles will come from just that direction.

The smaller hells create fewer problems of scale. Many contemporary painters, when portraying these hells, use traditional techniques. Leon Golub, for example, has made strong narrative paintings about political thuggery, sometimes inspired by the dictators and the death squads of Latin America. One shows a soldier in leather boots grinding down the outstretched hand of a prisoner. Now attracting serious attention, Golub was overlooked in the 1960s and '70s when the use of subject matter was unfashionable. He does a masterful job of putting into paint the power-hungry look of mercenaries, interrogators, and thugs. They strut around with childish importance, leering uncertainly at the viewer like dumb kids who think their mischief is cute. The paint is applied with ham-handed force, which suggests the stolid integrity of hands callused with labor, and reminds the eye of peeling posters and crumbling walls. The rough forms have the boldness of a flag and the unfinished grace of underground politics.

In her beautifully coarsened pictures of women, Nancy Spero (who is married to Golub) has often used expressionist devices to portray a sexual hell. For example, her way with ink does not simply give her figures shape and substance. The ink spills across the pages as if it contained the anger and screams of women throughout history. In a recent series, each image was roughly joined to another in a long series. This connection created the impression of history unfolding as a jagged but continuous story of outrage. The hurry in her images gives Spero's art the scrawled urgency of work done in a prison on sheets or on rolls of toilet paper.

IF SPERO and Golub avoid problems of scale, they do not quite escape righteousness—the most common failing of political art. Their perspective is too comfortably superior to the horrors on view. As a result, the horrors they display titillate our moral pride. The greatest artists, when attacking the abuse of power, make feeling good about oneself less easy. They may paint terrible subjects with dismaying detachment, for example, or establish intimate relations with the devil—how better to understand him?—by demonstrating that fellow's charm. Recall the fascination of Goya's creatures: that blackening beauty raises the moral pressure. Such artists implicate both themselves and the viewer in evil. It is more interesting to see an artist wonder and worry about how an ordinarily decent person—you, me, him—will behave in testing circumstances than to see the usual finger pointed at the usual suspects.

One might justly argue that discussing

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shades of gray is inappropriate when the house is burning down—that torture is not a subject for fine discrimination. In art, however, there are many kinds of simple. The simple outrage in *Guernica* cuts in beautifully complex ways. The classical allusions, the forceful abstraction, the avoidance of obvious symbols such as the swastika—all combine to give the painting distance as well as immediacy. The viewer will blame mankind, not just the Nazis. Golub's painting, by contrast, is often confined within the melodramatic good guy versus bad guy framework.

DESPITE the difficulty of portraying the heavens and hells of power, few contemporary artists address the more modest subject: the regular slog of politics. Where in the reign of Reagan is the pen of a Daumier? There are several reasons why artists shun this strategy. Blame the nature of the beast, in part: artists generally find the extremes of power a more vivid subject. Also important, however, is a lingering condescension, inherited from modernism, toward politics as usual. Even with the slow fade of modernism into convention, today's artists cannot quite bring themselves to join in court gossip.

The most important reason why we lack artists in the tradition of Daumier (and why Golub and Spero appear somewhat old-fashioned) is that power itself—the very feel of power—has changed. Young artists today possess neither a visceral understanding of power (typical of a Rivera or a Golub), nor a satirical view of establishment power (typical of a Hogarth or a Daumier). Instead they are reading, or reading about, structuralism and its offshoots. And they live in the age of television. As a result, the power that matters to them is not a factory or a missile or a Rockefeller but something much vaguer: the power to represent. In a society awash in advertising and glitz, the camera is considered more powerful than the gun, and the media's influence is usually thought to be repressive, the servant of class interests.

This understanding of power has two consequences for political art. First, it leads contemporary artists to attack the dominant (to use the characteristic but dreadful phrase) "modes of representation." That is, they try to expose or "intercept" the messages hidden in mass imagery. Dismantling a stereotype in an advertisement becomes an act of free-

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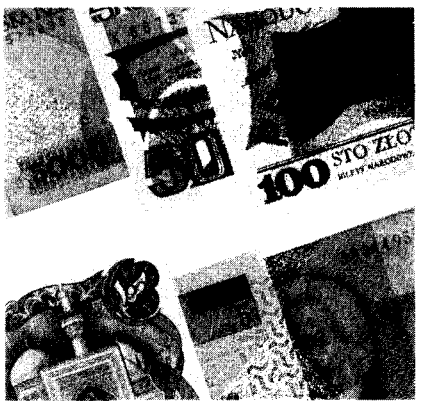

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dom. Barbara Kruger, a young artist who works with "found imagery" instead of the "found objects" of modernism, will borrow a photograph and jazz it up with words and layout tricks until it resembles a strong layout in *Vogue*. But her way with jazz teases the hidden rhetoric of such images into the light—in particular, the economic and sexual messages. On the photograph of a marble bust of a woman, for example, is the message, "Your gaze hits the side of my face."

At its best, such work awakens an eye glazed by the media. It can reveal the hidden hurts of class and the sly workings of power. More often than not, however, trying to subvert the "modes of representation" leads to a thin, esoteric, and bloodless art that smells of the seminar room. More inclined to coin new words than create new societies, artists and critics of this persuasion have transformed the struggle for power into a clash of style. Where political artists once spoke of the "expropriation" of capital, they now discourse on the "appropriation" of imagery. It is no wonder that punk, a rebellion fought entirely on the field of style, was fashionable among artists. Nor is it surprising that graffiti, which scratches the face of the anonymous city, became the rage. Graffiti is a weapon of the powerless. And it attacks with style. It appropriates an indifferent world by adding its own marring signature—a private message publicly sent.

The second, more subtle consequence of this understanding of power is to lead artists away from politics, toward passivity and an elegant, highly mannered art. If one regards representation itself—not what is represented—as the essential issue, if one believes in interpretations not facts, then political action will seem increasingly pointless. Images of Coca-Cola and Stalin, Renaissance perspective and "allover" space, will all seem somewhat better or somewhat worse versions of lying. It will become hard to resist an uncommitted, dandylike sipping of the "modes," including the à la mode. Images of images, lies about lies. The fascination, that of a mirror before a mirror, is bewitching—but a far cry from outward-looking political art.

Perhaps political art today lacks nothing so much as a satisfactory simplicity. When modern revolution and art were young, good minds could develop a clear, direct, and physical understanding of power. They could be narrow but deep, simple but not simpleminded. We are now in a mannerist period, in which the arrow of meaning does not fly straight. An artist who wants to criticize corporate life, for example, will not do so directly. Like Robert Longo, a fashionable young artist, he will elaborate that old point only under the cover of irony and a brash, shiny art. He will simultaneously profess his interest in Hollywood and act proud of his ability to manage money. Artists like Golub, in the older tradition of Rivera, will be more admired than copied. Spin, complication, razzle-dazzle, jokes—these now seem the necessary counterpoint to power. In one important respect, however, we should relish our elaborate situation. Political art usually does best in the worst of times.

TORY DAYS

The Morning After: American Successes and Excesses 1981-1986 by George F. Will

(The Free Press, 430 pp., $19.95)

With this new volume, which covers the years (so far) of the Reagan presidency, George Will has given us three collections of his newspaper columns in eight years. He has also published one book whose title, *Statecraft and Soulcraft*, invites us to a work of political philosophy. Given that he is taken to be a conservative, and announces that he is a Tory, we can look to him for a clear statement of contemporary American conservatism, a definition of what an American conservative today should believe. And since Will's career as a syndicated columnist has coincided with the flamboyant rise to power of a cock-a-hoop conservatism of some stripe, this would seem to be a useful time to look, and Will would seem to be well equipped to point the way.

He is not modest in his claims to be our guide. "My aim," he writes in the preface to *Statecraft*, "is to recast conservatism in a form compatible with the broad popular imperatives of the day, but also to change somewhat the agenda and even vocabulary of contemporary politics." He should charge more for the tour. Will is "a lapsed professor of political philosophy," with "a continuing, even quickened interest in the state and standing of political philosophy" since his lapsing. As a writer, he tells us in the manner of the Smith Barney commercial, "I write (of course) the old-fashioned way, in longhand, with a fountain pen"; and prominently displayed in the photograph on the cover of this book is a fancy fountain pen that Will is holding. If we are uncertain why this recommends him, he informs us elsewhere of his "firm conviction that the rushing typewriter, with its clackety-clack rhythm, is an enemy of well-crafted sentences," and that congressmen during the first 30 years of the Republic wrote a stately prose because they "dipped quill pens in inkwells."

Armed with the authority of statecraft, soulcraft, and sentencecraft, he tells us he is not like other journalists who are "too proudly 'factual' to pay attention to anything but the nuts and bolts," and so "miss the element of mind"; his subject is "not what is secret, but what is latent, the kernel of principle and other significance that exists, recognized or not, inside events, actions, policies and manners." (This last citation is from *The Pursuit of Happiness and Other Sobering Thoughts*, which appeared in 1978.) He assures us often that he will reveal "Conservatism properly understood.... Real conservatism.... The truly conservative critique"—the opening words of three successive paragraphs in a single column (reprinted in *The Pursuit of Virtue and Other Tory Notions*, in 1982).

Will's most beguiling credential, however, is his claim to be a Tory, a word (when used with the "t" in the upper case) hard to fix with any meaning on the American scene after 1783 (as *Webster's Third International*, by the way, would seem to confirm). This vaunt assumes its most outlandish form in the preface to *The Pursuit of Virtue*. Will begins with a mildly amusing quotation

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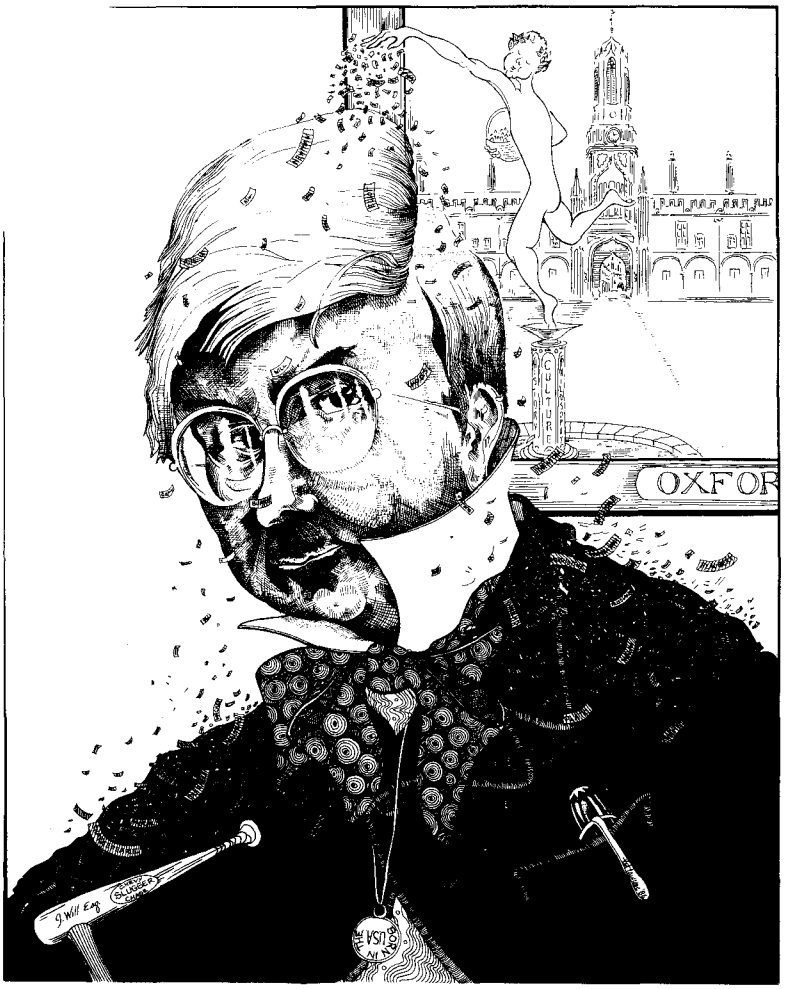
from Stephen Leacock about the writer's craft: "Just get paper and pencil, sit down, and write as it occurs to you. The writing is easy—it's the occurring that's hard." But not for Will. "Actually," he at once says, "the 'occurring' is not hard for someone blessed with a Tory temperament."

The writer glides like a skater, and the reader can too easily glide with him. Will in his bow tie is an elegant Victorian skater on the pond, and the maiden on his arm feels blessed. "Ah!" she sighs, "a Tory temperament—you do like to sound old-fashioned, Mr. Will." Mr. Will pats her muff and skates on: ". . . and sentenced to live in this stimulating era." The maiden begins to flutter, "Oh, to be sentenced . . . ," but realizes too late that they have been skating on not even thin ice, and she goes under, as the reader will many times, with no hand held out to rescue her.

But Will has jumped onto the op-ed bank to assert to the orchestra of his admirers that in his columns there are "continuities, and mine are conservative convictions. I call them 'Tory' because that is what they are. I trace the pedigree of my philosophy to Burke, Newman, Disraeli and others . . . ." Will tracks this lineage of his ideas many times, throwing in an assortment of "others," and still adding "and others." He even claims that their origin may be found in Aristotle, "a founder of conservatism, properly understood." The question is whether Aristotle *has* been properly understood. A liberal, after all, may as easily draw on his philosophy; to call Aristotle a "founder of conservatism" is an anachronism as facetious as it is perverse.

Still, the most bizarre genealogical claim for his ideas appears in *Statecraft*, a slim book that we are nonetheless entitled to take—since he so presents it—as his testament. "When a kind reader calls me unpredictable [not the drowning maiden's word for him], I am tempted to respond: to anyone sufficiently familiar with the minds of the Oxford Movement, circa 1842, all my conclusions are predictable." Of course few Americans, even if Will were among them, are "sufficiently familiar" with the Oxford Movement to know what he is talking about. We can only ponder, not to his credit, why the claim is made. There is no explanation. It is thrown in. Nothing follows from it.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Even if the whole sentence were not a giveaway, there is a giveaway at its core. According to the founders of the Oxford Movement in 1833, its purpose was to uphold "the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession and the integrity of the Prayer Book." Which of Will's conclusions is predictable from that? And what does it have to do with America, or with American conservatism, or for that matter with the price of eggs? The Oxford Movement reached a crisis in 1841, when John Henry Newman, one of the ancestors most frequently claimed by Will, published his *Tract 90*, demonstrating to his own satisfaction that the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England were compatible with Roman Catholicism. In 1843 Newman gave up his living, and shortly thereafter he went over to Rome; but men such as Pusey and Keble held on in the Church of England. Thus, when Will tells us to look to the Oxford Movement, "circa 1842," he is pointing to the exact year in which it was riven in two by *Tract 90*. Before we can find his conclusions in "the minds of the Oxford Movement," we need to know whose minds Will is talking about. Those who followed Newman to Rome? Or those who stayed with Pusey in the Anglican Church?

His admirers may say this is picky, but it is not. Will's pretensions to a wider and deeper learning than is possessed by his audience, by other journalists, and by American conservatives in general (who he mockingly suggests at one point appeal to Burke without having read the essay on *The Sublime and Beautiful*; has he?)—these pretensions are not a mere trapping, an adornment to his writing or to his "recasting" of conservatism. They are not playful. They are the pillars and struts of such thought as there is. Moreover, since the ancestors to whom he appeals are rarely Americans, not even the Founding Fathers, but European and especially English thinkers and politicians, it is not unimportant to point out that no Englishman "sufficiently familiar with the minds of the Oxford Movement" could explain how this familiarity makes "all" Will's conclusions predictable. If he had said that *some* of his ideas were akin to, or drew nourishment from, *some* of the ideas of *some* of the minds of the Oxford Movement, we could let it pass. But as it stands, in so prominent a place at the beginning of his testament, it is a conceit (in both senses) and an ill-mannered use of what looks suspiciously like a little learning.

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So Will has appealed to Toryism, a peculiarly English political tradition; to the names of three English conservatives, if we overlook the fact that Burke was Irish; and to an English movement that was concerned with the defense of the creed and liturgy of the Anglican Church. But then we are confounded near the end of *Statecraft* by another grandiose assertion: "The conservatism for which I argue is a 'European' conservatism." And he hastens to inform us that "it is the conservatism of Augustine and Aquinas, Shakespeare and Burke, Newman and T. S. Eliot and Thomas Mann." (What happened to Aristotle?) But hardly anything that matters is held in common between any English and (continental) European conservatism. As for the list of names—why doesn't he throw in Uranus, the first ruler of the universe; or Cato the Elder; or Virgil (*arma virumque cano*: he was clearly for a strong defense); or Jerome? And if he's going to rope in Shakespeare (what did he do to be card-filed as a European conservative?) why not Cervantes? (Of course, he can't have Rabelais. "Rabelais, the Hugh Hefner of his time," one can almost hear Will begin . . . .)

WEIRD LISTS of names recur; perhaps this is why the "occurring" is easy. But the list upon which one must gaze most fondly is in Will's defense of Solzhenitsyn against his critics. Solzhenitsyn's "ideas about the nature of man and the essential political problem are broadly congruent with [watch the skater glide] the ideas of Cicero and other ancients, and those of Augustine, Aquinas, Richard Hooker, Pascal, Thomas More, Burke, Hegel and others." Even if we keep our seats at the mention of Hooker, a mild commonsense skeptical Englishman, and of Pascal, surely we must jump to the ceiling at the inclusion of Hegel. There is nothing about the thought and writing of Solzhenitsyn, absolutely nothing, that can be deduced from such a roster.

With these lists, with the individual names he is always tossing out, in, and over his shoulder, we come to Will's famous use of quotations. His critics are usually satisfied to call it intellectual and cultural name-dropping. But Will's practice suggests a far more serious disorder. At times explicitly, but also implicitly in his whole posture, Will puts himself forward as an almost lone defender of our Western cultural heritage (but with support from William J. Bennett). And yet he rummages among its thought and literature like a bag lady. Commonly the quotations or references are introduced with parentheses that are leaden—"Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, a classic of political literature"—but these seem designed to assure the reader of the author's familiarity with all of the culture. Or the parentheses are unforgivably tawdry: "Santayana and Plato, both of them clever fellows"; "Dostoyevsky (who knew something about crime and punishment)"; "Willie Keeler, baseball's Plato"; elsewhere we are told that "baseball people are Pythagoreans."

OR TAKE the beginnings of these consecutive sentences: "Like Moses, Humphrey was discovered early in his career . . . . Like Moses, Humphrey was a bundle of opinions . . . ." What discernible meaning could there possibly be in such an analogy? What discernible respect for either Moses or Humphrey? (Whatever Moses communicated, it was not "opinions.") Flaubert gets the same treatment as Moses: "Jim Wacker, professor of football at Texas Christian University, may have the finest sense of nuance in language since Flaubert." And again: Earl Long "had Flaubert's flair for bons mots." Yeah, that's why we read Flaubert, for his bons mots. (Has Will confused the bon mot with the mot juste?) "*The Bill James Baseball Abstract*, the most important scientific treatise since Newton's *Principia*"; and "The Bible, which devout baseball fans consider the *Sporting News* of religion." This is the manner of a talk-show guest, or of an entertainer on the lecture circuit. Or, more to the point, of a new kind of columnist.

What is absent from Will's lists of names, from his entire papier-mâché model of Western culture, is a recognition of struggle—of the struggle of idea against idea in the civilization as a whole, of the strenuous and tormented struggle within the individual thinkers and artists he so lightly robs, like a pickpocket. One would not know from Will's appropriation of Augustine, for example, that the latter's certitudes were a recovery from the anguish of sin; or that Pascal placed faith above reason only after, and because of, tremendous doubt. There is a profound sense, after all, in which Western culture has been built on the admission of sin and doubt. But temptation, error, sin, pleasure—and the struggle with all of them—are absent from Will's smug defense of a placid cultural heritage. There is no evidence in his writing that he has ever fought with temptation or error. Civilization came to him gift-wrapped. It seems to have "occurred" to him, like the names. In this he reflects a persistent shallowness in American conservatism, not least in the alleged "revival" of conservative thought in recent years. There is no quest in it. It is quite remarkable that Will should quote with approval Jowett's question to D. G. Rossetti in Max Beerbohm's famous cartoon: "And what were they going to do with the Grail when they found it, Mr. Rossetti?" It is not any "true conservatism," but only the shallowest liberalism, that could ask that question.

In the new collection there are two essays extravagantly praising the columns of Miss Manners. Watch how he praises her: "Like Plato, . . . Miss Manners knows . . ."; "Not since Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* has there been a counterrevolutionary trumpet call as ringing as Miss Manners's"; "Miss Manners is like Lincoln . . ."; "Miss Manners deals like Metternich with . . ."; "[Her prose] is compounded of . . . an adamancy never achieved by Pope Pius IX, whose Syllabus of Errors was, compared with Miss Manners's syllabus, halfhearted. . . . Actually, her book is the most formidable political book produced by an American since *The Federalist Papers*. . . . As Plato understood . . . ." All good clean fun, his admirers may say. But the fun is limp; and more important, it is an aping of any serious allusions to our cultural heritage, and so only belittles it. Will makes culture evaporate. In his hands it becomes a thing of no gravity. This columnist who so manfully shoulders the burden of upholding our culture is an Atlas bowed under a balloon.

THERE IS in Will's attitude toward (and abuse of) culture a philistinism that is profoundly antithetical to any "true conservatism." It is a philistinism that can offer "Oscar Wilde . . . with the stiletto of his cynicism . . . ." A stiletto, Wilde's weapon? Wilde's purpose was not to draw blood. And anyone who can speak of Wilde's cynicism, who can think even for a second that Wilde was cynical, must either not have read a page he wrote, or read with such obtuseness that he might as well not have bothered. It is the same philistinism that calls John Buchan "an unsurpassed memoirist"

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(not surpassed—whom shall we pick?—by Cellini, or by Gibbon, or by the author of *The Education of Henry Adams*?); the same philistinism that pronounces that "Mallarmé should have been a columnist," a comment of colossal ignorance and vulgarity that cannot be based on anything Mallarmé wrote, or on anything Will has read, but merely on one of Auden's teasing clerihews, which Will quotes; the same philistinism that echoes a line from "Prufrock" so ineptly as to say that Nixon "measured out his life in forkfuls of chicken à la king"; the same philistinism that declares no less inappositely that Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* is "comparable in depth and power to the memoir of another American alienated from his times, *The Education of Henry Adams*"—adding even then that "Adams is less unsettling." Oh?

THIS philistinism that extends in so many ways through Will's writing is not a peccadillo we may overlook. It undermines his whole claim to speak in defense of our civilization and its cultural heritage, or more specifically in defense of any conservative tradition. But his fitness to be the conservative guardian of our culture, so ready to arm it to its teeth and engage it in rash military adventure, looks quite as questionable if we take our stand in the present, and not on what Will imagines to be our heritage from the past. For example, Will ends his embarrassing paean of praise to Oxford, where he spent a brief but much-advertised time, with: "What I am trying to say is that Henry James was wrong. He said that 'youth' is the loveliest word in the language. For those who favor 'old'—old ideas and institutions—this ancient community is the rainbow's end." ("Favor" is at least an honest word for the depth of his reverence for the past.)

But every "true conservative" knows that it is no service to the traditional culture to stand outside the contemporary culture, to separate himself so ostentatiously from its growing life that there is nothing to defend but a museum, a dictionary of quotations, and a conversation piece. If, as Will puts it, "2,500 years" of our civilization have brought us only to a wasteland, with the pitifully few blooms he finds in it, then there must have been something radically at fault with Western civilization's *past*, something so wrong that it is not even worth defending.

There is no need to show with more names and quotations how little Will finds to interest him or to enjoy in modern literature, art, or music. His condemnations of modern art are facile and unilluminating. He fastens his attention on some of the works easiest to ridicule, and most of the time he is not looking at the painting or sculpture, but clipping some of the more unintelligible pronouncements of contemporary criticism. That there is babble in much contemporary criticism does not mean the work of an individual artist, or the whole effort and achievement of modern art, is babble. Again, it is not a quibble, but an essential criticism of Will's attitude toward contemporary culture, to point out that when he roundly condemns Jackson Pollock (in 1978, and again in 1985), he says not a word about any Pollock painting, not to mention the whole body of his work, except the old-hat criticism that they are "canvases covered with drips." On both occasions he bases his criticism on the same silly tribute to Pollock by an unidentified art critic. *Blue Poles*, to take but one Pollock painting, cannot be described as a canvas "covered with drips," and only an eye uneducated not only in modern painting, but in all painting, could say so. In fact, one doubts whether he knows what paint is, or for that mat-

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ter what Raphael did with his "revolutionary" use of color.

It is an offense to the past, as well as to the present, to come down so clumsily on the experiment, the trial, the essay. But let us switch from "high" culture to "popular." Popular culture has always energized high culture in our civilization. In fact, that could be claimed as one of high culture's distinguishing merits: it has always kept itself open and receptive to what comes up from below. (This is not least true of our language, which Will's fountain pen affects to use and defend with a recovered stateliness denied to the rest of us.) And it is not rash to say that we live in a time, even a century, in which popular culture has energized high culture more consistently, and to greater benefit, than in any other. To Will, virtually the only emblem of that popular culture is (you guessed it) rock 'n' roll, and (you guessed it again) he condemns, rejects, and ejects it. Except for . . . .

WILL'S FAMOUS takeover bid for Bruce Springsteen in September 1984, which provoked Reagan's own takeover bid during the election campaign, was written after a friend took him to a Springsteen concert. It was simply very brave of him to go at all, since "I may be the only 43-year-old American so out of the swim that I do not even know what marijuana smoke smells like. . . . Many of his fans regarded me as exotic fauna . . . (a bow tie and double-breasted blazer is not the dress code)." But he is full of praise for Springsteen. "There is not a smidgen of androgyny in Springsteen, . . . rocketing around the stage in a T-shirt and headband." He is a "wholesome cultural portent," and "affirms the right values." And "if this is the class struggle, its anthem—its 'Internationale'—is the song that provides the title of his 18-month, worldwide tour, 'Born in the USA.' "

What is absent from the whole piece is any interest in or concern for the music, except to say, "This is rock for the United Steelworkers, accompanied by the opening barrage of the battle of the Somme. . . . I made it three beats into the first number before packing my ears" from a "pouch of cotton." Rock is now 30 years old. It has carried round the world, even penetrating the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union, crossed boundaries not only of nations and cultures but of classes and generations. It may be taken as a striking expression of the vitality of American culture. But it is the music that has done this. Will doesn't seem to know that what he is writing about is music, and not merely a "plague of messages about sexual promiscuity, bisexuality, incest, sadomasochism, satanism, drug use, alcohol abuse and, constantly, misogyny"—as if people go to rock for the lyrics and not the music. Will might do well to expose his prudishness to those rock stars of our venerated past, to the Goliard poets, the wandering scholars, the troubadour poets of the late Latin middle ages. He will discover the astonishing extent to which bawdiness gives to culture . . . life.

IT WAS Disraeli, one of the English conservatives claimed by Will as an ancestor, who said in his rectorial address at the University of Glasgow that one must know the spirit of the times in which one lives, even if it is to resist it. One of the weaknesses of Will's conservatism is that he sets himself so vigorously and indiscriminately against the spirit of his times that he gives himself no chance to know it. Will's contempt for our culture, "high" or "popular," is evidence finally of an unexperiencing nature. Little in our culture seems to touch Will deeply, or often. Experience is hard, even the experience of reading; but the "occurring" not only comes easily in his writing, it seems to come as easily in his reading.

Does he read? If one goes back to one's "favorite" poem or painting or music in different moods, whether of exaltation, serenity, or gloom, there is always something more to find. Often such genuine reading leaves scars, marks of pain. Or, if you will, of sin. Before we go to God on proudly bended knee, as Will's writing suggests we should, we might at least acknowledge that he made us—once we were out of Eden, that "animal" place that Eve found as boring as Chevy Chase—the most revolting of his creatures. That is what Augustine, at least, should have taught Will: the strength of an experiencing nature. But it seems correct to say, on the evidence of Will's written work, that he has not *experienced* a feeling or thought, of guilt or of innocence, in his life.

In his self-appointed role of champion of our culture, Will naturally gives his attention to the parlous condition of American schools and education, not least as "transmitters" of our cultural heritage. Nobody will deny that there is cause for concern. But the slightly faddish alarm that is being voiced today—in Will's new book as well—carries its own danger. For if the American academy is also such a desolation, people may begin to think, when the faddish interest dies down, that it is beyond recovery, except for some enclaves for the privileged that will turn out the elites in whom Will exhorts us from time to time to place our trust.

FOR ONE thing, if the "core curriculum" is such a shambles—William Bennett recently made the point again at Harvard—why do American universities continue year after year to turn out such fine scholars, not least in the disciplines of the humanities that the conservative wishes to keep strong? Barely noticed, American classical scholarship has been leading the world for decades; and I know no British historian who does not pay tribute to the work of American historians, and to the generally high standard of historical scholarship in America, even in the fields of English and European history. What is more, it is my observation that every profession in America has an abundance of good and well-educated minds. If all these are the exceptions, the survivors in the wasteland, one must ask how many such exceptions were produced by Oxford at whatever period Will imagines it to have been the noble institution he extols. As for the "transmission" of our cultural heritage, the great universities of Germany, Italy, and France did not produce a generation with enough understanding of, or care for, our culture to resist, for instance, its devastation by Hitler.

When the "brain drain" from Britain began in the 1950s, it included many graduate students. One of them, the writer Andrew Sinclair, later said that "America is today of course what the Grand Tour was to the 19th century." Another, the critic and novelist Malcolm Bradbury, declared that "America is intellectually attractive; not only as a sort of spell in the 'colonies' to get started, but as a real way of tuning in to advanced ideas, modern tendencies, intellectual excitements. So the pattern is likely to continue"—and of course it has. But it is precisely these *advanced* ideas, *modern* tendencies, intellectual *excitements*, that Will disdains, and encourages his readers to disdain.

Far too much of Will's conservatism merely adds one more voice to the long whine of 20th-century conservatives against modernity. But the "true conser-

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vative" does not wish only to "transmit" the cultural heritage, as Will keeps saying, as if it were finished and could be wrapped and mailed to the future. He wants to bring it forward and to understand it, so that it will help to energize the present, as it has indeed energized more of modern literature and art than Will appears to know. Will makes our precious heritage lifeless, a corpse, embalmed and carried before the people, with the ultimate and hardly disguised purpose of keeping them quiet, and the society quiet, and above all the culture quiet. It is not only the past he puts in a museum, as if there is nothing more left for the traditional culture to do. He puts the present in a museum, too.

Thus it is not surprising that he traces the "European conservatism" he says he loves to so few Americans, so few contemporaries. But one must ask: Which European conservatism, exactly? The English Toryism he also claims would find it very hard to go along, for example, with De Maistre. But it is the absence of more than an occasional appeal to an American political tradition that is most damaging. There are only scant and usually dismissive references to the Founding Fathers, and even to *The Federalist Papers*. In all the lists of names and rivers of quotations, there is only one idle mention of Calhoun. Will's is a conservatism with the South left out, which makes no sense. There is no examination, for example, of the group of Southern writers who published a very conservative manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*, against the way American society and its economy were going at the end of the 1920s—at the end of the administrations of Harding and of Coolidge (who is praised by Will because the "nation under his stewardship enjoyed a 45 percent increase in the production of ice cream") and of Hoover.

In fact, to an extent astonishing in a journalist, America itself is not very visible in Will's work. In all these volumes there is little sense of any region, city, town, or place in America; little of what its people actually do, feel, think, enjoy, and value, except going to baseball games, driving automobiles, and of course listening to obscene lyrics and reading pornographic magazines. ("[Hugh] Hefner, the tuning fork of American fantasies"!) And there is little of American history, either. We are entitled to ask Will to say, then, precisely on what things American his conservatism stands. "Cars and girls are American values" is not enough.

Still, Will has a difficulty with which one may sympathize. And unlike many American conservatives, he is at least honest enough to mention it, even if not quite to face it. His difficulty is with, well, America; and it is at this point that he most clearly resembles the Tory he claims to be. "Capitalism means the liberation and incessant inflaming of appetites," he acknowledges. "Capitalist dynamism" dissolves "cultural conservatism." Business should rise "above the morals of the marketplace." American conservatism "tends complacently to define the public good as whatever results from the unfettered pursuit of private ends. Hence it tends to treat laissez-faire economic theory as a substitute for political philosophy, and to discount the importance of government." And from all this come "the somewhat barren and negative social prescriptions of American conservatism." These are genuine Tory sentiments, expressed by English Tories 200 years ago in voicing their early horror at the Industrial Revolution, and by

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Southern Agrarian writers 50 years ago. But it is hard to see where they can lead Will. This is the difficulty an English Tory feels in accommodating himself to American conservatism: the difficulty that there is in America itself so strong an attachment to, and presumption in favor of, "free enterprise" and the market and its values. One may almost say, deliberately leaning on the ambiguity in the word, that this capitalism is *constitutionally* part of the United States.

One may agree with Will in criticizing excessive individualism (libertarianism in its vulgar, contemporary form) and the opposition to strong government in American conservatism. But then there is another difficulty. Individualism is rooted in the culture, as well as in the political tradition, of the nation, even in its beginnings. Even if one does not question some of the purposes for which Will wishes to strengthen government—to "legislate morality," for example—an English Tory (or anybody else, for that matter) may still say he would not recognize an America in which there was not so strong a flavor of individualism in politics, in culture, in society.

In the end, it is not only American conservatism Will puts into question, dissociating himself from much of what most people understand it to mean. He rejects a great deal of America, too. When he argues not only against Thoreau, not only against Emerson and his transcendentalism, but (in this new collection) against Huckleberry Finn on his 100th birthday, one begins to wonder where his America may be found, now or in the past. One begins to understand why he sets himself on the shoulders of Augustine, Aquinas, the Oxford Movement, Oxford University, "and others," or at least borrows the support of their names. For what he discounts is nothing less than the liberation from political and theological oppression that has been the achievement of the United States and its inspiration to the world.

IF I HAVE not spoken of Will's columns on the topical issues of American politics, it is because in these volumes, and not least in his new collection, he republishes relatively few of them, preferring to give his readers his lighter and easier reflections on such matters as baseball (a great deal of that in the new book), child-rearing, and what are today called the "social issues," mainly pornography, obscenity, rampant sexuality, abortion, and the withdrawal of life supports from the retarded and the handicapped. In the political columns that he has chosen to reprint, there is a running, rather awkward, and not terribly damaging criticism of "Reaganite conservatism," as one would expect from Will's own brand of "conservatism"; and surprisingly little, given his concerns about capitalism, on either current economic policies or more long-term developments that are profoundly altering the character of capitalism, and even the claims it has made in the past to encourage such virtues as thrift, hard work, and prudence.

For the rest, there are the columns exhorting the administration to create an armory to which Will seems to set no limits, or even to imagine any; to be ready to use those weapons; and at last to resist and even roll back the advance of the "evil empire"—an advance that always seems, when he lists the countries that have fallen since the division of Europe during the Second World War, to be far less menacing, or rather, far more carefully, quietly, and successfully resisted by America and its allies, than Will's rhetorical flourishes suggest.

What's more, just as Will offers few specific economic prescriptions, it is hard to see what he expects an American government to do when, for example, the Polish government with the Soviet Union behind it crushes an opposition movement—unless it is rashly to take up arms. On the 25th anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall, Will asked, "What if the blockade begun in 1947 had been smashed by force? What if the Allies had used force to unseal East Berlin at dawn, August 13, 1961?" But those "what ifs" are too lightly asked and answered. What if war had resulted? The Soviet Union in 1947 was indeed a "shattered nation"; but Western Europe was a shattered half-continent, over which Soviet tanks would have swarmed with little resistance. And if one is going to count the Berlin blockade a terrible defeat for America, when in fact that blockade was broken and West Berlin was saved, why not count the Marshall Plan in 1947 a far greater American victory? Because it was peaceful?

HENRY FAIRLIE

NEIGHBORS AND STRANGERS

Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land by David K. Shipler

(Times Books, 596 pp., $22.50)

For an Israeli of liberal outlook who believes in his country—in its importance, its necessity—David Shipler's study of the relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel is painful to read. This is not because, like much that has been written on the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is shallow, sentimental, emotionally partisan, condescendingly detached, or unfair to someone or everyone. If it were, it might be as easily forgotten as many other books on the subject. But Shipler, the *New York Times* correspondent in Jerusalem from 1979 to 1984, has written a thoughtful, well-researched, deeply caring work that is genuinely sympathetic to both sides—and precisely this is what makes it so depressing: because the picture it paints is a dismal one.

True, there is little here that the Israeli liberal is not already well aware of. He does not need Shipler's book to learn that in Israel Jews and Arabs live on either side of a barrier of alienation and mistrust, across which there is little real contact; that few Jews make the effort to understand Arabs and few Arabs make the effort to understand Jews; that true Arab-Jewish friendships in such circumstances are all but impossible; that many Arabs are not upset when innocent Jews are killed by Arabs and many Jews are not upset when innocent Arabs are killed by Jews; that the Arabs under Jewish rule are either second-class citizens who are commonly discriminated against or (in the case of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) are total non-citizens subject to daily harassment, arrest, denial of basic rights, and sometimes torture; that the organization that claims to represent them, and that apparently commands their allegiance, has in all likelihood the wealthiest, most corrupt, and

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morally vilest leadership ever to raise the banner of national liberation; that .... But the list is a long one.

Our Israeli liberal knows how long it is—and tries not to think about it too much, because life in Israel is difficult enough without dwelling on the bruter facts. Better to deal with them piecemeal, filtering them in and out of one's consciousness before they can accumulate: here a radio report about young Jewish hikers shot to death by PLO assassins, there a newspaper story about the blowing up of an Arab family's house because one of its sons is accused of terrorism, still elsewhere a study showing that the younger Jews and Arabs are, the less hope for co-existence and the more hostility toward each other they feel. One's thoughts are grim at such times; yet as long as these reports come sporadically, with a decent interval between them, it is possible to sleep well at night.

SHIPLER'S BOOK ABOLISHES this interval. Exhaustively, methodically, basing his insights on a large number of interviews with Jewish and Arab informants and on numerous sociological studies, Shipler examines one facet after another of Arab-Jewish interaction, or the lack of it, and he demonstrates convincingly that these form a structural unity whose parts are indivisible and firmly rooted in the institutions of both communities, especially the ruling Jewish one. Almost nothing, he makes clear, in this intricate network of oppression, exploitation, violence, ignorance, and prejudice is incidental; almost nothing is simply an unfortunate lapse from generally observed higher standards; almost everything *is* the standard, the inevitable expression of a comprehensive situation that, in one way or another, encourages both Jews and Arabs to act and react as they do. Even under such conditions, of course, there are numerous cases of kindness, decency, and refusal to run with the pack that transcend communal lines. Shipler, a troubled man on the lookout for every ray of light he can find, points these out where he can. Yet it is such affirmations of human solidarity, he stresses, that are the incidental occurrences, because the cards are stacked heavily against them.

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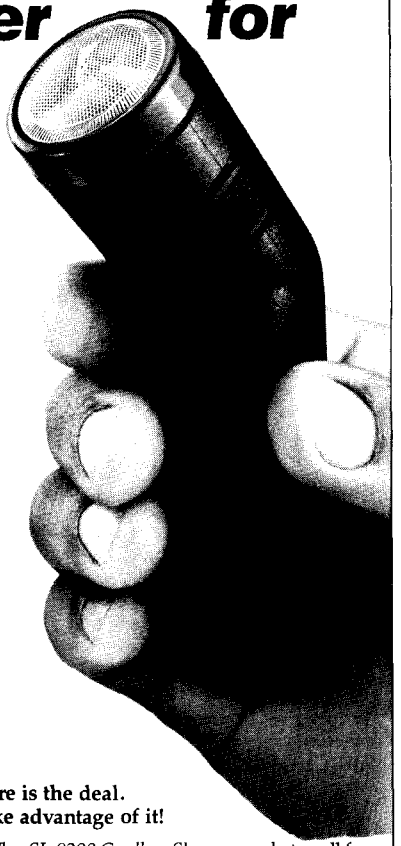

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result is a series of reflecting mirrors in which each side is portrayed as feeling toward the other the same xenophobic emotions it believes to be projected toward itself. A description of how the Jewish school system teaches its children to think negatively about Arabs is followed by a description of how the Arab school system does the same with regard to Jews; an account of Arab society's condoning of PLO terror is paralleled by an account of Jewish society's justification of brutality toward Arabs; and so on. The effect of this mirroring, Shipler contends, is to entrap Arabs and Jews in Israel and the "occupied territories" in a permanent cycle of rage and counterrage, fear and counterfear, grievance and countergrievance, from which there is no escape, because the process is a self-perpetuating one that is fed emotional fuel far faster than it can burn it. Persons of goodwill on both sides can deplore such a chain reaction and wish to see it ended, but they are powerless to do anything about it, for the realities have a momentum of their own. And so, in the very last lines of his book, after relating a rare and moving event that he has witnessed—a three-day encounter group of Jewish and Arab teenagers who have had the courage to get to know each other better—Shipler despairingly concludes:

> But this is not the beginning of a new Arab-Jewish life; it is just the end of a fleeting dream. . . . The moment is joyous and sorrowful, for what has happened here is beautiful and futile. . . . Soon, all the Jews have gone, and the Arab youngsters are left on the hill alone. And then, when their bus comes, they are gone as well. And Neveh Shalom [the site of the encounter] is enveloped in sunlight and sadness, having sown its seed in the brass earth.

CAN AN ISRAELI liberal say anything to make this less painful? Not if it means arguing with Shipler's findings. They are accurate enough, and though he does not always write with an insider's knowledge of Israel (he seems not to have learned Hebrew or Arabic, and his personal acquaintanceships were apparently limited to English-speaking intellectuals of both camps in and around Jerusalem), he is an intelligent observer with a good enough eye and ear to get all of the major (and nearly all of the minor) details right. Those that he doesn't are less attributable to his own misperceptions than to his relying on the wrong authorities in matters he knows little about—especially historical ones. For instance, he uncritically takes a Hebrew University professor's word for it that Yehudah Halevi, of the 12th century, the greatest post-biblical poet and one of the finest philosophic minds the Jewish people has ever produced, was a "racist" whose views are compatible with anti-Arab bigotry in Israel today. (It is an anachronistically absurd judgment. Halevi, who wrote his philosophical work in Arabic, was a man of his times, and his Neoplatonic theories of Jewish ontological superiority to gentiles were no more "racist" in the modern sense than was Aquinas's belief that the Jews of his time bore blood-guilt for the murder of Christ.)

THIS EXAMPLE MAY seem trivial. It points, however, to what is a weakness as well as a strength of *Arab and Jew*: its essentially ahistorical approach. I call this a strength because, by reducing the historical baggage of his book to a minimum (an introduction that briefly sketches the background of Jewish and Arab claims to Palestine, and scattered paragraphs elsewhere), Shipler dispenses with much wearisome repetition of what has already been written about ad nauseam and gets quickly down to what he does best—talking to people and transmitting his and their impressions to us. Even in writing about the present he is highly selective. "This is not a book," he informs us at the outset, "about the diplomatic, political, or military dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. . . . These elements are presented only insofar as they shed light on the subject at hand." Of such elements he presumably had enough while writing for the *Times*, and for this one may be thankful, as there is undoubtedly more human interest in a group of giggling Arab schoolgirls in Ramallah or a worried Jewish teacher in Nazareth than in an interview with the assistant foreign minister of Egypt or the Israeli deputy something-or-other. From out of the mouths of diplomats, politicians, and generals comes little but stale rhetoric.

The trouble is that by de-emphasizing history and politics, one gains in readability but loses in overall perspective. It takes two points to make a line, and the here and now without the there and then yields only one. Photographed in this way, the present seems static, instead of dynamic, as it is. For, though things may get better, or worse, or a bit of both, they never stay the same for very long—not even for the five years that Shipler was in Israel, years that witnessed (though he mentions these events not at all, or only in passing) the signing of a peace treaty with Egypt, the final withdrawal from Sinai, the war in Lebanon, a severe economic crisis, and two national elections, in the first of which the Likud retained power and in the second of which it temporarily lost power to Labor and Meir Kahane was elected to the Knesset. While one would hardly guess it from reading *Arab and Jew*, each of these events changed perceptions and policies in Israel in small and large ways. Permanent cycles exist only on paper; real wheels shift speed and direction as they turn.

And if this is true of a five-year period, it is all the more true of the hundred years spanning the history of Zionist settlement in Palestine, during which Arab-Jewish relations went through many phases. They were, for instance, very different between 1882 and 1917, when Jews were a small minority in a land governed by Moslems, from what they were between 1917 and 1948, when Jews and Arabs were competing equals under British colonial administration. And they were not the same after 1958, when Arabs were a small and nonthreatening minority in a Jewish state, as they were after 1967, when the sudden quadrupling of Arab numbers restored the bitter conflict but not the rough equality of British Mandate days. Thus, Shipler's tendency to extrapolate current attitudes onto the past, and to assume they were always pretty much what they are now, is often non-factual. To take one example: Who now remembers that in 1966 the Israeli left won a battle of many years' duration by achieving the abolition of the military government to which the Arabs of the Galilee had been subject and making the Arabs' status equal to that of the Jews? (And who now reflects, for that matter, that had this not happened at the last moment before the Six-Day War, which resulted in the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Arab Galilee too might be under military rule to this day?) Or to take a rather different case: now dying out in Zichron Ya'akov, the town south of Haifa where I live, are the last of a breed of Jewish farmers who, born in Ottoman Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sometimes suckled their first milk from Arab wet nurses, played happily as boys with Arab children, and grew up to be fluent in Arabic and on intimate terms with Arab culture. These men did not live in the millenni-

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um, and their attitudes toward Arabs were ambivalent; but they inhabited a world that neither their grandchildren nor Shipler knows very much about today.

SIMPLY STATED, the point is that while attitudes shape historical events, historical events shape attitudes even more. The abyss separating Jews and Arabs in Israel today is not the inevitable product of some attitudinal Original Sin, though it can certainly be traced to identifiable Jewish and Arab postures in the past. It is rather the outcome of a specific historical development brought about by the Six-Day War (which, as a matter of record, Israel's leaders were anxious to avoid)—that is, of a situation that finds three-and-a-half million Jews ruling by force over two million Arabs, whose numbers and fierce nationalism are such that they cannot possibly be democratically integrated into Jewish society or non-coercively dealt with by it. Under such circumstances, what pattern of Arab-Jewish relations other than the existing one can be imagined? Had the Six-Day War not broken out, so that the proportion of Jews to Arabs in Israel was 9-to-2 rather than 7-to-4 (and shifting in the Arabs' favor), the Arab problem in the country might well have been on its way by now to the solution that seemed attainable in 1966, several hundred thousand Israeli Arab citizens might have been leading relatively satisfied lives amid a more or less tolerant Jewish majority, and Shipler's book might never have been written.

There is an ethnocentrism in *Arab and Jew* that, while rarely becoming overt, hovers continuously in the background. One has the feeling that for Shipler, the tragedy of Jews and Arabs in Israel is primarily one of prejudice and misunderstanding, like that of whites and blacks in America before the civil rights revolution. Most members of each group, he believes, are "wounded spirits" projecting their inner fantasies and anxieties onto the members of the other group, and most need some sort of intensive sociotherapy to heal them and bring them to their senses. (Characteristically, as a "white," Shipler's own identification seems to be more with Jews than with Arabs; yet for that same reason, perhaps, he tends to be harder on Jews and to blame them more often.) The plain fact of the matter, however, is that what lies at the heart of Arab-Jewish tensions in Israel is *not* subjective prejudice but an objective contest for land and power, and the analogy with blacks and whites is at best misleading.

The real issue at stake is not who will live in whose neighborhood or whose children will go to school with whom, but who will control politically what parts of a small country inhabited by two different peoples. And as such, until the matter is settled once and for all, each side has legitimate reasons for being phobic about the other. Though Meir Kahane may be as psychotic as Hitler, the situation in Israel today is quite different from that in Hitler's Germany. Unlike the Germans' fear of Jews, a numerically insignificant and powerless group in Germany, the fear of the danger posed to Jewish society by a large and hostile Arab minority in its midst is far from delusional. This indeed is the appeal in Israel of Kahanism, which is not a pathological response to an imaginary problem but a hideously logical response to a very real one. For if, within the country's present borders, the Jews cannot absorb the Arabs and are gradually being outnumbered by them, does Israel have a choice other than either total South-Africanization or expulsion?

EVEN WITHIN SHIPLER'S American frame of reference, the analysis needs to be different. After all, is it really the case that changes of heart brought about the enormous improvement in the status of blacks and in black-white relations that took place in America in the 1950s and '60s? Would it not be closer to the truth to say that a combination of black militancy and white judicial and political decrees brought about changes of heart? Most likely the overall situation of a middle-class black in Jackson, Mississippi, is better today than that of a middle-class Arab in Haifa (to say nothing of Nablus), just as it was worse 30 years ago. (To compare lower-class blacks with Arabs is pointless, since the social and economic pathology of the black ghetto has fortunately no parallel among the Palestinians, not even in the refugee camps.) But the middle-class white in Jackson now relates to that black differently only because he was forced to by political decisions that he initially fought against and lost. A century of encounter groups in Mississippi could not have accomplished what the Supreme Court and Congress did in little over a decade.

Ironically, therefore, the future of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel that so justifiably concern Shipler will be determined almost entirely by the diplomats, politicians, and generals whom he has chosen to omit from his book. Though they may bore us to tears with their platitudes, nearly everything depends on them. Only a political settlement removing from Jewish control the great majority of the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza Strip can provide a non-catastrophic way out of the situation that Shipler describes. There are simply no other peaceful alternatives.

But is this conclusion not every bit as despairing as Shipler's? Yes, if prospects for such a settlement continue to seem as dim as they do now, when, despite some last-minute diplomatic hoopla, it is clear that as far as any substantial progress toward peace is concerned, Shimon Peres's two years in the prime minister's office have been wasted, partly because of his own hesitancy and mostly because of

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King Hussein's. After years of warning the world that there is little time left to solve the Palestinian problem, the king has taken to running the clock out on it himself. With Yitzhak Shamir and the Likud back in power, one can now look forward (in the best of cases) to up to two more years of impasse and increased Jewish presence in the "occupied territories," while time keeps ticking away. By 1988 there must be new elections. If Labor wins, there may be one more chance for meaningful negotiations over the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. If it does not, de facto annexation will quickly reach the point of no return that some observers, such as Meron Benvenisti, have been speaking of for years, and Jews and Arabs west of the Jordan will be locked into a cruel long-term struggle all of whose possible outcomes are frightening to contemplate.

ONE CAN ARGUE, of course, as Shipler probably would, that popular attitudes toward Arabs in Israel make a clear-cut Labor victory unlikely, and that, even if Peres does win by a commanding margin, these same attitudes will preclude his offering the minimal concessions that Israel must make if negotiations are to take place at all. Perhaps. Yet the Arab issue will not necessarily be the major one in the next elections, and one should in any case never underestimate the degree to which forceful leadership, or simply the power of events, can reshape public opinion, especially in a country as impressionable as Israel. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977, which changed the thinking of hundreds of thousands of Israelis overnight, is a particularly dramatic example, but it is not the only one. I can recall, for instance, that immediately after Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's sudden death in 1969, an opinion poll of Israelis asking which candidate they thought most qualified to succeed him showed the foreign minister, a woman named Golda Meir, at the bottom of the list with three percent of the tally. Less than a month later, after the back-room politicians had elevated her to the office, a similar poll gave her 70 percent. Despite their seemingly passionate views, Israelis on the whole may be a much more malleable and pragmatic people than Shipler thinks they are. (I am not talking, of course, about the genuine fanatics among them, who are rather overrepresented in *Arab and Jew*.)

In general, the common division of Jews in Israel into doves who see the need for a compromise with the Arabs and hawks who do not is simplistic. There are "hawks" who see the need for a compromise too; what they don't see is the possibility of one. And some, at least, would be happy to be convinced they are wrong. Recently I had a conversation with a grandchild of one of the old-time farmers in town, an intelligent young man whom I knew to have been a staunch Beginite. He began talking to me with disgust about his recent reserve duty on the West Bank, about Arab children stoning Jewish soldiers, about Jewish soldiers beating Arab children, and so on. The whole situation, he thought, was hopeless. "So what would you do about it?" I asked, bracing myself for a Kahanite diatribe. "What would I do?" he said. "I'd give the bastards a state of their own and to hell with them. I'll be happy if I never have to beat up a stinking little Arab again."

Such illiberal sentiments are what a liberal politician such as Peres must at some point mobilize if he is to lead the country out of the blind alley it is in. Arabs and Jews do not necessarily need to understand each other in order to understand their own interests. Yet part of the problem is that Israeli politicians, among them Peres himself, tend to suffer from "Shiplerism" too. That is, they view themselves as the optionless executors of an existing national consensus rather than as the potential makers of a new one. Still traumatized by his defeat by Begin in 1981, when he blew a large lead in the last weeks of the campaign to a stridently jingoistic opponent, Peres seems determined never to be "out-Arabed" again, just as liberal Democrats in the South once feared being "out-niggered" by openly anti-black rivals. This may or may not be a correct formula for personal survival, but it can only lead to national disaster. And of course even a Peres willing to chart new courses cannot do so by himself; without the cooperation that he has not gotten so far from Jordan and Egypt the task he faces is impossible. If the moderates cannot reach an agreement between them, the only beneficiaries will be, as usual, the extremists on both sides, whose all-or-nothing outlook has made them secret allies all along.

HILLEL HALKIN

Hillel Halkin is a writer and translator living in Israel. He is the author of *Letters to an American-Jewish Friend: A Zionist's Polemic* (Jewish Publication Society of America).

AS THEY LIKE IT

Northrop Frye on Shakespeare by Northrop Frye

(Yale University Press, 186 pp., $17.95)

William Shakespeare by Terry Eagleton

(Basil Blackwell, 114 pp., $14.95)

Last April, like one of the madly peripatetic professors in David Lodge's *Small World*, I flew from the West Coast to West Berlin for the World Shakespeare Congress. It was a ridiculously long flight, but I did not set the distance record: there were Japanese, Indians, Chinese, Malaysians, Australians—all equally jet-lagged, blear-eyed, genially disoriented. At odd hours of the night, lights burned in hotel rooms, less, I suspect, to illuminate erotic adventures than to shine on worn copies of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* or *Henry VI, Part Three* clutched in quiet desperation by sleepless academics. By day the delegates wandered, *Complete Works* in hand, in and out of hotel lobbies, dining halls, formal receptions, seminar rooms, lecture theaters. Russians chatted with Americans about the "bad quarto" of *Hamlet*; Israelis exchanged views with Saudi Arabians about the two texts of *King Lear*; West Germans and East Germans discussed the "vile

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wall" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

What does this extraordinary anthropological ritual, repeated every four years, mean? The answer that springs most quickly to mind is Ben Jonson's tribute to his "beloved" rival Shakespeare: "He was not of an age, but for all time." And for all places, too, judging from the global participation in Berlin. During his own lifetime, Shakespeare's plays were performed not only in London, but in darkest Yorkshire, on shipboard off Sierra Leone, in eastern Europe. In the centuries that followed they seemed to find their way everywhere: Swiss cantons, Zulu townships, Brazilian settlements. As Lawrence Levine has recently shown, 19th-century America alone mounted thousands of Shakespeare performances. In towns with names like Cherokee Flat, Red Dog, and Fiddletown, miners watched productions of *Othello* or *Hamlet*; then the actors would wipe off the stage blood, change costume, and conclude the evening with a rousing farce like *Nick of the Woods* or *Did You Ever Send Your Wife to San Jose?*

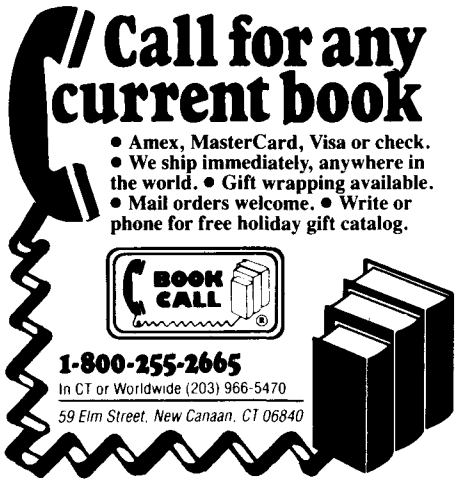
Before we launch into the time-honored, pious celebrations of the Bard's universality, we might ask ourselves exactly what it is that we are celebrating as universal. Shakespearean productions in Mark Twain's America were themselves often close to farce; the Duke's travesty of Hamlet in *Huck Finn* is scarcely an exaggeration: "To be, or not to be, that is the bare bodkin." And this license was not the consequence of the gaucherie of the young republic but the sign of its continuity with a vital tradition of theatrical practice extending back to Shakespeare's own time. The plays have from the outset been heavily cut, revised, translated, transformed; they are reset in other countries and times, characters' names are changed, new characters are introduced; opening scenes are dropped, songs and dances are added, plots (most of them borrowed to begin with) are drastically revised. These are not the perversities of modern producers. From the late 16th century on they have been standard, and entirely appropriate, theatrical procedures. Indeed, without this extreme flexibility there could be no widespread cult, no massive academic priesthood, no World Shakespeare Congress. But what do we imagine survives these metamorphoses? What is the aesthetic essence that we profess to celebrate? And what if we are forced to conclude that there is no essence?

SHAKESPEARE, WRITES the celebrated Canadian critic Northrop Frye in a book entitled simply *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, "has two sides to him." One is the "historical side," the London playwright who had to worry about censorship, keep a close eye on box-office receipts, calculate what would please both king and apprentice. The other is someone Frye calls "the poet." It is important to acquaint ourselves with the historical Shakespeare because an encounter with the different values, beliefs, and customs of another culture is one of the rewards of a liberal education; it is important to study the poet Shakespeare because in doing so we can "look into the greatest mystery of literature, the mystery of how someone can communicate with times and spaces and cultures so far removed from his own."

As the reference to liberal education suggests, Frye's Shakespeare is closely bound up with the goals of the modern university. Frye insists upon the centrality of the theater—"in every play Shakespeare wrote, the hero or central character is the theatre itself"—but the theater invoked here is not a particular social institution embedded in a given time and place; it is a transcendent idea, an organizing principle, a prophetic vision of life. The social space that actually makes itself powerfully felt in Frye's book is less the theater than the classroom. The chapters retain many of the phrases of the lecture hall: "Resist the temptation," he tells his readers, "to talk in your essays" about Shakespeare's own personal beliefs or psychic vicissitudes; "For all the rest of the plays in this course we have the Folio text only." These are lecture notes for "Shakespeare IA."

The students in Frye's course are not taught to ignore history altogether, but they are instructed to keep in mind that the greatest mystery lies elsewhere. Hence it is not surprising that both the social and the literary history they learn is neat, clear-cut, and curiously beside the point. Shakespeare "didn't use the drama for anything"; "there is never anything outside his plays that he wants to 'say' or talk about in the plays"; with "the instincts of a born courtier," he safely mirrored the "deeply conservative" attitudes of his audience, but the power of his plays derives from a different instinct, an instinct for the dramatic that is "little short of infallible." Frye takes as his principal task the elucidation of that infallibility through introductory readings of ten of the major plays. Each of the readings, shaped no doubt by the demands of the lecture hall, is careful, clear, and judicious, sensitive to the nuances of language and plot, gracefully wide-ranging while at the same time attentive to detail. Occasionally, Frye ventures further: Romeo and Juliet as "sacrificial victims" in an ancient, archetypal story; the supernatural in *Hamlet* as "the clicking and whirring of a sacramental machine"; Cleopatra as the "White Goddess" chronicled by Robert Graves.

But these are brief flashes. There is little in this book to recall the startling architectonic power of Frye's famous *Anatomy of Criticism*, or the daring investigation of the archetypal structure of Shakespearean tragedy and romance in his *The Fools of Time* and *A Natural Perspective*. Frye feels, I imagine, that students must grasp home truths before they can proceed to the higher wisdom. But while Frye's individual readings are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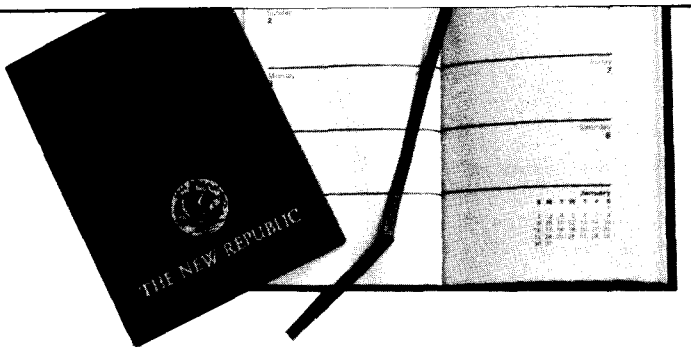
shrewd, his home truths often seem to me profoundly misleading, and they cast a disturbing light on the assumptions that would appear to underlie his more sophisticated writing.

MOST OF THE powerful work done over the past decade in both Shakespeare criticism and literary theory has demolished the cozy distinction between the historical and the poetic. In part this demolition has involved the re-embedding of poetry in its social and cultural situation, an assault upon the autonomy of the literary. The assault has had particular force in Renaissance studies, because 16th- and 17th-century European culture had so little sense of literary autonomy, least of all in the theater. At the same time the historical, once understood to be a privileged realm of neutral facts, has been reconceived as intimately bound up with symbolic practices, conflicting strategies of interpretation, armed mythologies. Moreover, the notion of a mysterious communication with the past, an access through literature to a timeless realm of archetypes, has been greatly unsettled. Close analyses of reception—that is, of the particular strategies of interpretation and experiences of pleasure that shape responses to works of art—have called into question the whole idea of a transcendent archetypal repertory that artistic geniuses somehow make available to all men and women. Those analyses have directed attention instead to the ways in which specific cultures constitute systems of meaning and hence to the shifting interests encoded in any given conception of the past.

Frye clearly opposes these critical tendencies, sometimes loosely grouped together as "the new historicism." It would have been fascinating to see him make a strong case against them, but instead he simply ignores the challenge. He speaks of the "priority of mythology to ideology," as if he could burrow down beneath the contingent pleasures, anxieties, and interests of particular places and times, but in this book at least he succeeds only in marginalizing the "historical Shakespeare" and making the "poetic Shakespeare" seem at once infallible and bloodless. History here is reduced to a carefully painted diorama before which the critic has placed an impeccably stuffed figure of the Poet.

If Frye, one of the masters of modern literary theory, seems magisterially indifferent to the theoretical turmoil of the past few years, the British Marxist Terry



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Eagleton, who has also published a new book on Shakespeare, seems eager to immerse himself (and Shakespeare) in the destructive element. "It is difficult to read Shakespeare," he writes, "without feeling that he was almost certainly familiar with the writings of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein, and Derrida." But in Eagleton's book, as this exuberant fantasy suggests, the historical and the poetic have been neither linked nor dissevered; they have been metamorphosed into modernist allegory. The allegory has Shakespearean characters but a conspicuously 19th- and 20th-century plot: "Like Macbeth, the bourgeoisie will become entangled in its own excess, giving birth to its own gravedigger (the working class)"; or again, Lady Macbeth "is a 'bourgeois' feminist"; or again, Prospero's island "signals the imminent victory of the exploitative, 'inorganic' mercantile bourgeoisie"; or elsewhere, "Coriolanus, though literally a patrician, is perhaps Shakespeare's most developed study of a bourgeois individualist."

It would probably be pointless to insist upon all the ways in which Coriolanus, violently hostile to displaying himself in the marketplace and averse to negotiating in the senate house, seems the very antithesis of the bourgeois. And to question the applicability of postindustrial social categories to preindustrial England would be equally irrelevant. For despite his frequent invocation of history, Eagleton is not really writing a historical study of a Renaissance playwright. Speeches are attributed to the wrong characters, lines are misquoted. (My favorite is the passage in which the unused coat of mail in Ulysses's speech—"To have done is to hang / Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail / In monumental mock'ry"—becomes "a rusty nail.")

These errors stem, I suspect, not so much from haste (though the book seems to have been dashed off) as from indifference, even hostility, toward the project of historical reconstruction. The central interest here lies in teasing out the relations between language and the body, and though Shakespeare is the ostensible focus of attention, the rich complexity of these relations as Eagleton concedes them resists a stable localization in the particular play or author or historical period.

EAGLETON swoops in, to be sure, on specific interpretive problems—he is particularly good on the paradoxes of the law in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*—but his deepest concerns are more theoretical and abstract. He is fascinated above all by interlocking systems of equivalence and exchange—law, money, and language—that appear to demand orderly norms and measurements but that somehow generate disorder. Something about the very structure of these powerful systems, he argues, when they are actually set in motion, breeds anarchy, measurelessness, uncontrollable desire, wild metamorphoses, violence. Eagleton never establishes just what it is in the operations of order that leads to excess; he continually invokes an explanatory allegory of class struggle, but that allegory is itself shifting and unstable. At moments, the body is a figure for feudalism and language is the capitalist excess that overthrows the old order; at other moments, the body is a figure for the restless energies of capitalism and language is the old dream of a natural social order. The instability of the allegory makes it difficult for Eagleton to adopt a stable, coherent perspective on Shakespeare or for that matter on contemporary society. But this difficulty is in a sense the point of the book: he writes as a critic with intense Marxist commitments but with deep political uncertainties. A Marxist intellectual in the West may dream of being Fortinbras, but Eagleton acknowledges that he feels like Hamlet.

If Eagleton is not particularly interested in the past, if his concerns are overwhelmingly with the present moment, why does he bother to write about Shakespeare at all? Because, I suppose, in England (and above all at Oxford, where Eagleton teaches) Shakespeare remains a supremely privileged emblem of the past, and this past, "the tradition of all the dead generations," as Marx put it, "weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." But the situation in America is quite different. The past scarcely weighs anything at all. For American academics, the absorption of the past into allegories of the present seems all too easy, and the political force of these alle-

ROMAN PEACE

Declining fast as the fall in Germania's forest,
senile Augustus would shout for his hacked legions
down erect colonnades. The old man grew more depressed
at this one defeat than from his victories. Well, all legends
constrict in mania and morbidity.
Manacled torches magnify his shadow
going to bed, and his sandals scrape
like a stick raking through rotten, leathery leaves.
He forces withered branches through the sleeves
of his cotton nightgown, and prays for rest.
The single lance of a candle will guard his sleep.
The marble weight of Rome lies on his chest.
The Sphinx stares on the sand with lidless eyes.
My legion, my legion, let the old man weep—
the grave is shallower than young Alexander's sighs.

The foraging, the chipped swords, the firebright iron
rest like tongues in their scabbards. A bat
circles the milky courtyard, a coin
with an eaten profile races the stars
toward Germany, where the legion's lances have all grown
leaves since the infamous war, and wounds of combat
are stitched with moss. An owl stares
and drinks the moonlight with its saucer eyes.
Just an owl. Not Minerva. The throne,
with no arse to warm it, lengthens its shadow. A rat
with a quivering nose raises its question,
then, doubting such peace, scuttles like a leaf down the wall.

DEREK WALCOTT

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gories appears far more likely to play into the hands of the right than of the left. Perhaps this will explain why a number of American academics, including me, dream of a serious negotiation with the past, and imagine ourselves neither absorbing Shakespeare nor being absorbed by him.

One night during the World Shakespeare Congress, I crossed over to East Berlin to have dinner with East German friends. On my way to their apartment I stopped at the ruins of the great Berlin synagogue torched on Kristallnacht. Its crumbling walls, hollow, roofless vault, broken windows, and barbed-wire perimeter were a miserable sight, rendered still more miserable by the news as I write this of another synagogue horror story in Istanbul. At dinner one of my friends told me about the play then being performed at the Deutsche Stadttheater: *Der Kauffman von Venedig*, the play, you recall, about the Jew Shylock. I asked if there had been controversy surrounding the choice of this particular play, and its first performance in East Germany since the war. Yes, my friend told me, there had been a heated debate. Her generation (she is, I would guess, in her late 40s) wanted to put it on in order to confront the terrible past, but her parents' generation opposed it precisely because the past was so terrible. And what of her children, I asked, what did they make of the play? "Oh they," she laughed with a certain embarrassment, "they thought it was all about Israel."

The prospect of a world without historical memory is appalling.

STEPHEN GREENBLATT

Stephen Greenblatt, professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, is the author of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press).

FLAT TAX

A History of Taxation and Expenditure in the Western World by Carolyn Webber and Aaron Wildavsky

(Simon and Schuster, 734 pp., $24.95)

This is an ambitious and disappointing book. The authors undertake to treat the entire history of taxation and government expenditure from ancient times to the 1980s. The restriction to the Western world, proclaimed in the title, is not strictly observed in the text: the second chapter treats "Finance Without Money" in China and India, as well as in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Once the authors turn to ancient Greece and Rome, however, their range does narrow to parts of Europe and to the lands of European settlement.

But in fact Webber and Wildavsky are principally interested in the United States, whose exceptionality in the 19th century requires an entire chapter, and whose budgetary vicissitudes in the 20th century occupy pride of place throughout the last third of the book. It was obviously to cast light on contemporary budgetary dilemmas that these two experts in government finance consulted the past in the first place. And to judge by the impressive number of authorities cited in their footnotes, the effort they put into that task was enormous.

Yet the result is sadly wanting. Careless errors abound. Thus we are introduced to "the Hanoverian, William III, a Dutchman," who was in fact of the House of Orange and married to a Stuart; and to "David Lloyd George, prime minister for the first two years of the [First World] war," when Herbert Asquith actually held that position. More serious errors disfigure the account of ancient times. For example: "Several small autonomous city-states were established on the Attic peninsula" (meaning, presumably, Greece, not Attica), whose "social structure remained like that in the ancient monarchies" and whose populations "remained stable." How ancient Greek city-states can be described as having a social structure like that of Egypt and Mesopotamia (which are the ancient monarchies referred to) defeats my imagination. And Greek population most assuredly did not stand still in the classical age; witness the colonial expansion of the sixth century and the diaspora of the Hellenistic age.

Such errors, though distressing, are not the real problem. The authors' major difficulty arises from an awkward alternation between choppy summaries of well-known events (Magna Carta and all that) and bouts of excessive generalization so lofty that it is hard to know what it is precisely that they are talking about. Their fourth chapter, "Finance in the Private Governments of Medieval Europe: Poor Kings," may serve as an example of this unhappy alternation. After ten pages of simplified narrative—barbarian invasions, administrative decline, economic revival—comes a long, disjointed account of revenues and expenditures in a few medieval states, primarily England (37 pages), and a similarly scrappy section on fiscal controls (17 pages). The chapter ends with five pages on "The Meaning of the Middle Ages: Theories of Change." In this summation, after rejecting military, economic, and technological explanations for the disintegration and re-emergence of political authority in medieval Europe, the authors conclude:

> We prefer a broader explanation of change than those deriving from economy or technology: it arises from differences among alternative social orders. Choice among collectivism, individualism, egalitarianism, or some combination means more to people than a choice of occupation or income. Reflecting a society's values and practices, the social order in which a person lives affects all aspects of his existence: his daily life, his familial relations—in short his world view.

Then this high abstraction is brought a little closer to the subject of the chapter, in this way:

> Bit by bit, feudal monarchs negotiated a workable combination of collectivism and individualism. Eventually hierarchy came to dominate the polity. Yet its formal structure coexisted with elements of economic individualism, and over time these elements grew stronger.... Protestantism cannot explain capitalism because, socially speaking, they are much the same thing. That is why we have tried to explain how competition among feudal magnates spread into other areas of society so there was less collectivism and more individualism.

So much for Weber. So much for Douglas C. North. So much for simpleminded historians who favor multiple causes, or refrain from trying to assign causes at all.

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The authors' central concern is to explain how the budgetary process and the regulation of governmental expenditure have gotten out of control in the last few decades. To do this, they develop the idea that a shift took place among the three alternative "political cultures" available to human beings: hierarchical, market, and sectarian. The market culture weakened, while hierarchical and sectarian (read: egalitarian) cultures waxed strong. As a result, older limits on governmental expenditures weakened, so that deficits became chronic and governments took on ever expanding roles in society.

For a brief period, they declare, roughly from the 1850s to 1914, technical skills of budgetary management coexisted with restraints on government expenditures, because hierarchical and market cultures were in balance and sectarianism was weak. But since the 1960s sectarianism has grown mighty in its turn; and, striving for equality, it has unbalanced governmental budgets and blunted fiscal management by devising all sorts of new forms of governmental expenditure, most of which escape annual review and deliberate management.

The tone of the book is therefore lugubrious, though the authors are keen to point out that while "at current rates of governmental growth, market regimes will be exceedingly weak or have essentially disappeared" within 40 years, leaving us to face "the real test of whether democracy [can] exist without substantial market forces," still, "none of this need happen." But choices that might alter governmental growth will bring their own "new problems of which we are as yet unaware."

Webber and Wildavsky are entirely reticent about how their prime movers operate. "Market, sectarian, and hierarchical regimes wax and wane throughout history," they tell us, "though not according to any known cycle. Rather, these alternative ways of organizing social life are always present. History, as we conceive it, is about the consequences of people's choices of political ways of life—regimes and combinations of regimes—at particular times." And they offer this analysis: "The stronger the market forces, the lower the taxing and spending, the stronger the sectarian regime, the higher the spending and the lower the taxation; the stronger the hierarchical element, the more both revenue and expenditure go up."

But if the prime mover remains democratic and mysterious—the "consequences of people's choices"—the authors are still very much aware of what they are doing with the historic record:

> We have superimposed on historical events a theory of the relationships between budgets and regimes. Yet there are no sects or hierarchies lying thick on the ground, any more than there are masses or classes. The world we know consists of individuals. We see them as making choices, when they are allowed, between existing authority and some alternative, the aggregate result being patterns of budgetary action that occur as if the individuals were implicated in one or another political regime.
>
> Here it is, then, three times removed from reality.... The question is whether this threefold alchemy turns a golden subject into brass or whether it offers some advantages in interrogating history.

That *is* the question, and this reviewer regretfully concludes that their alchemy has indeed produced brass. Only a believer can make the leap from untold and unrecorded millions of "individual choices" to "patterns of budgetary action," and from budgetary patterns to three, and only three, alternative "regimes."

When Webber and Wildavsky take up the budgetary practices of modern governments over the last few decades, they have some shrewd and quite convincing things to say. And their comparative statistics on how European governments spend money as against the practices of the United States, Canada, and the modern exception, Iceland (where a balanced budget still prevails) are interesting indeed. Yet here, too, carelessness mars their work. What, for example, can one make of this: "If Vietnam War expenses are excluded, defense spending in constant dollars (see Table 18) did not change between 1954 and 1979. But within a year, between mid-1956 and 1957, defense spending rose almost 15 percent." Moreover, Table 18 ends with the year 1960, and so does not in the least sustain the initial assertion. Such passages cast doubt on the reliability of other information: only a careful check of the sources cited in the footnotes, which I have not attempted, could reassure the wary reader. It is a pity that such effort, such wide reading, and such good intentions have been spoiled by carelessness in matters of detail, and by so excessively abstract a scheme.

WILLIAM H. MCNEILL

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CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

Zimbabwe. Here's what it concludes: There have been "grave and persistent abuses of human rights." At least 1,500 civilians, "perhaps many more, were summarily killed by the security forces. Thousands more were ruthlessly beaten. . . ." Moreover, "several hundred thousand rural Ndebele civilians were systematically deprived of emergency drought relief." At least 100 leaders of the opposition, including leaders of the parliamentary opposition, have been abducted and "not been seen or heard from since and are presumed dead." "Torture has been used extensively in Zimbabwe's jails and detention camps." A harrowing litany of modes of torture is enumerated. The "tactics used by Prime Minister Mugabe's government are all but indistinguishable from those used by the regime of former Prime Minister Ian Smith, including the methods of torture . . . [and] the use of terror as a means of coercion." Even Mr. Duffey concedes that "there is no justification for these horrors," so what justification is there for giving Mugabe an honorary doctor of laws and calling him a "champion of human rights"? If this is not treason of the intellectuals, what is?

NOT-SO-SECRET SUBVERSION

To the editors:

As a prime victim of that McCarthyism or pre-McCarthyism that Ellen W. Schrecker analyzes in her *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, may I contradict certain aspects of Nathan Glazer's review of that book ("The Professors and the Party," October 6)? I say pre-McCarthyism because I was among the three-score victims of the 1940-41 Rapp-Coudert investigation. The result was what Schrecker calls "the largest single purge of academic Communists in American history."

Now, Glazer would have it that we were ousted not because we were Communists but for denying we were. I did not deny; I affirmed. Because I would not turn informer, I was convicted of perjury and spent 13½ months in prison. I am a felon (to this day I am not allowed to own or work in a liquor store, or own or drive an automobile). Yet Glazer asks: "If one denied one was a Communist when in fact one was, or took the Fifth Amendment, how could one then also honestly argue that being a Communist did *not* mean one was indoctrinating one's students, subverting the administration and one's colleagues?"

First, in none of the scores of teachers investigated was any charge made of classroom "indoctrination." That was a factor undoubtedly in the action taken by the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York, the successor to the Board of Higher Education that had fired us in 1941, when it formally apologized to us in 1981 for the injustice done. However, a question of indoctrination did come up in 1936, when the chairman of my English department walked into my classroom one morning unannounced to observe my performance. I was teaching Shelley, quoting from *A Philosophical Work of Reform*. Later that day, he accused me of quoting Marx in the classroom. What Marx? I was quoting Shelley. He was unconvinced. A few weeks later, I received formal notification that I was not to be reappointed for my ninth year; other teachers received similar notice. But there was such a protest from students, teachers, and the labor movement that we were all reappointed. That was the last we heard of any suspicion of indoctrination.

I will admit there was a "subverting" of the administration. In 1928 the college president was Frederick B. Robinson, an autocrat. He appointed all heads of departments, decided all curricular matters; there was no tenure system. By the time we were routed in 1941, there was a tenure system; a curriculum committee of representatives from each department; and there were elected committees on department appointments. This democratizing of the college structure was effectuated by the College Teachers Union, in which we Communists were active, and is still in operation in the colleges of the City University of New York.

Glazer makes much of the idea that Communists belonged to "a secret and conspiratorial organization." But why has the *secret* ballot become a sacred institution in American political life? Is it not because our American experience has taught us that the non-secret ballot might lay one open to penalties, economic, social, or political? The City College Unit of the Communist Party did not keep its presence secret. We circulated a monthly publication, *Teacher-Worker*, in which we announced our policies on problems on and off campus. We did everything we could to make our colleagues aware that there were Communists among them, even though we kept our individual identities private—secret, if you will.

When I was indicted on a charge of perjury in the first degree for refusing to name *other* names, I asked Morris Raphael Cohen, the most distinguished professor on the City College campus, and an anti-Marxist and anti-Communist liberal, to appear at my trial as a character witness. He said: "Morris, you don't have to explain anything to me. I know exactly what you are doing. In the Old Country we had a saying, 'It's no use telling the truth to the police because they wouldn't know what to do with it.'" Surely neither the Rapp-Coudert committee nor later the McCarthy committee and its clones would have known what to do with the truth.

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES
Editor, Jewish Currents
New York, New York

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

To the editors:

THE NEW REPUBLIC's and John Judis's protestations to the contrary, I fail to see any objective difference between political activism of the so-called "Religious Right" and that of "mainline" denominations ("The Charge of the Light Brigade," September 29). The latter have mounted well-organized and well-financed campaigns to influence the public agenda in a liberal direction, and routinely assemble to pass resolutions, largely critical of policies of U.S. administrations that fail to hew to their conception of what the world ought to be. I have yet to see the leadership of liberal churches labeled as would-be "ayatollahs," although they have been politicized longer than conservative preachers and denominations. Perhaps it is the relativistic theology espoused by so many "mainline" leaders that makes them immune to media criticism.

Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, et al. are not my kind of churchmen, but in a pluralistic society they have as much claim to advance their views as, say, Norman Lear and his hubris-laden followers of People for the American Way.

REV. DAVID APKER
Saint Luke's Episcopal Church
Madison, Wisconsin

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Traditions

AH, FREEDOM OF THE SKIES—what a glorious American tradition! Last August 31 a single-engine Piper plowed into the tail section of an Aeromexico DC-9 in the skies near Los Angeles International Airport. Eighty-two people died. Just before the accident, a second private plane flew into restricted airspace over the airport. According to FAA regulations, neither this plane nor the Piper had any business being where they were. The air traffic controller monitoring the DC-9 and the Piper was distracted when the third plane popped up on his radar screen. By the time he returned to look for the first two again, they had already collided. Wonder what ever happened to the pilot of that third intruder plane? Criminal charges, perhaps? A lawsuit? Banned from the cockpit for life? Even though this winged moron is accused of three other safety violations in addition to blundering into the off-limits Terminal Control Area, the Federal Aviation Administration is only suspending his flying license for *six months*. After that, it's back to the California skies. And this "punishment" is twice as severe as the average penalty the FAA metes out to other private pilots who buzz into the LAX airspace. (Note to travel agent: cancel my spring Disneyland plans.)

HERE'S SOMETHING ELSE to keep in mind the next time the private pilots' lobby tries to tell you how put-upon general aviation is in comparison to commercial flight: when the Business Council, made up of 100 or so executives from America's largest corporations, held a confidential meeting recently at the swanky Homestead resort in Virginia, dozens of corporate jets converged on tiny Ingalls Field nearby. To accommodate the extra traffic safely, the FAA had to send over two air traffic controllers from airports elsewhere in the state—it apparently does so every time the Homestead hosts a large gathering of flying corporados. Airline passengers helped subsidize this and all other general aviation air traffic services through the eight percent tax on airline tickets.

DEMOCRATIC SENATOR Bill Bradley of New Jersey, the intellectual author of tax reform, was TNR's guest for a lunchtime question-and-answer session the other day. The senator impressed everyone with his down-to-earth charm and thorough grasp of the issues, including arcane ones such as the Third World debt crisis. (Though he didn't impress some of us with a rather tortured defense of his vote in favor of aid to the *contras*.) To the disappointment of many of those present, however, Bradley insisted that he has no plans to run for president in 1988. He said he simply would rather pursue his committee work in the Senate, that he wants to master the issues and the legislative process. Of course, winning over a roomful of TNR editors and other journalistic types is one thing; TV-age campaigning is quite another, and Bradley, who disdains charisma tricks, definitely has his work cut out for him imagewise. Maybe he's aware of that too, and that's the real reason he balks at a run. But I'm willing to buy his explanation. If he appears miscast in America's video-plebiscitarian system of presidential politics, perhaps it's because he seems so perfectly suited to European-style parliamentary politics. If the United States operated according to such a system, a nutsy-boltsy issues guy like Bradley would already be among those considered for finance minister, or some other similar job in his party's next government. And that post would confer upon him both political status and policymaking clout. His aspirations to labor steadily in the legislative vineyards would make perfect sense. But in the American system, spending time on being a good legislator is tough to square with the relentless self-promotion involved in presidential politics. That's why anyone who prefers to govern rather than to run appears strangely, almost suspiciously, unambitious. And it's why the Democrats are more likely to nominate a senator like Gary Hart, who has used the Senate to further his presidential aspirations, not to fashion any concrete accomplishments.

CAN I BE THE ONLY lifelong baseball fan who's been having trouble getting worked up about the World Series this year? Now that the playoffs—oh, excuse me: the "League Championship Series"—have been extended to seven games, the Series is merely the last act in a three-week extravaganza known as "post-season play." Once a great American tradition, the Fall Classic now seems slightly anti-climactic. Anti-*climatic*, too. The games begin in late October, long after summer's glow has worn off, which results in the unnatural spectacle of turtlenecked ballplayers blowing furiously on chilled hands and huddling for warmth in their dugouts. Baseball's showcase event, in weather not fit for an exhibition game! The cold will probably be particularly bad this year: all seven games are being played at night in the Northeast corridor. Baseball's bosses let the television networks devote the weekend afternoons to football, in order to get a full day's worth of revenues from commercials. During Game 1 in New York, play-by-play man Vin Scully, NBC's version of a busted fan belt, actually had the temerity to marvel repeatedly at the players' shivering and swaddling themselves in parkas—as if his own employer weren't to blame for their distress.

BUT THE REAL transgression is that night ball puts the World Series on the wrong side of bedtime for millions of school-age kids, who are perhaps America's biggest baseball fans. I'm sure that this has already either triggered a historic national wave of parent-child quarrels, or resulted in record numbers of students reporting to homeroom in a bleary-eyed fog. And it gets worse. Back in the day-game era, the whole point of the World Series was to sneak your pocket AM radio into Spanish class, slip the earphone up your sleeve, pop it in your ear when the teacher wasn't looking, and then spend the period transmitting the score in sign language to your best friend across the classroom. Now it seems that all future generations of American youth are to be deprived of this important and enriching childhood experience, so that yuppies who toil in office buildings until nine can get home, simmer their Lean Cuisine, and still have time to catch Ron Darling puffing on his frozen fingers in between Honda commercials. No wonder so many youngsters are turning to drugs—or, worse, soccer.

C. L.

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